

@GAMER

ISSUE 019 | MAY 2012

FAR CRY 3

A fresh update on the forthcoming shooter and its innovative approach to multiplayer

PG. 48

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Assassin's Creed
Revelations
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BORDERLANDS 2

HANDS-ON

MAYA AND SALVADOR LEAD US INTO THE BATTLE AGAINST HYPERION!
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Kinect Star Wars Reviewed

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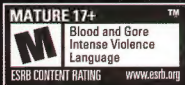


Observe. Plan. Execute.



SNIPER ELITE

V2



XBOX 360



XBOX
LIVE

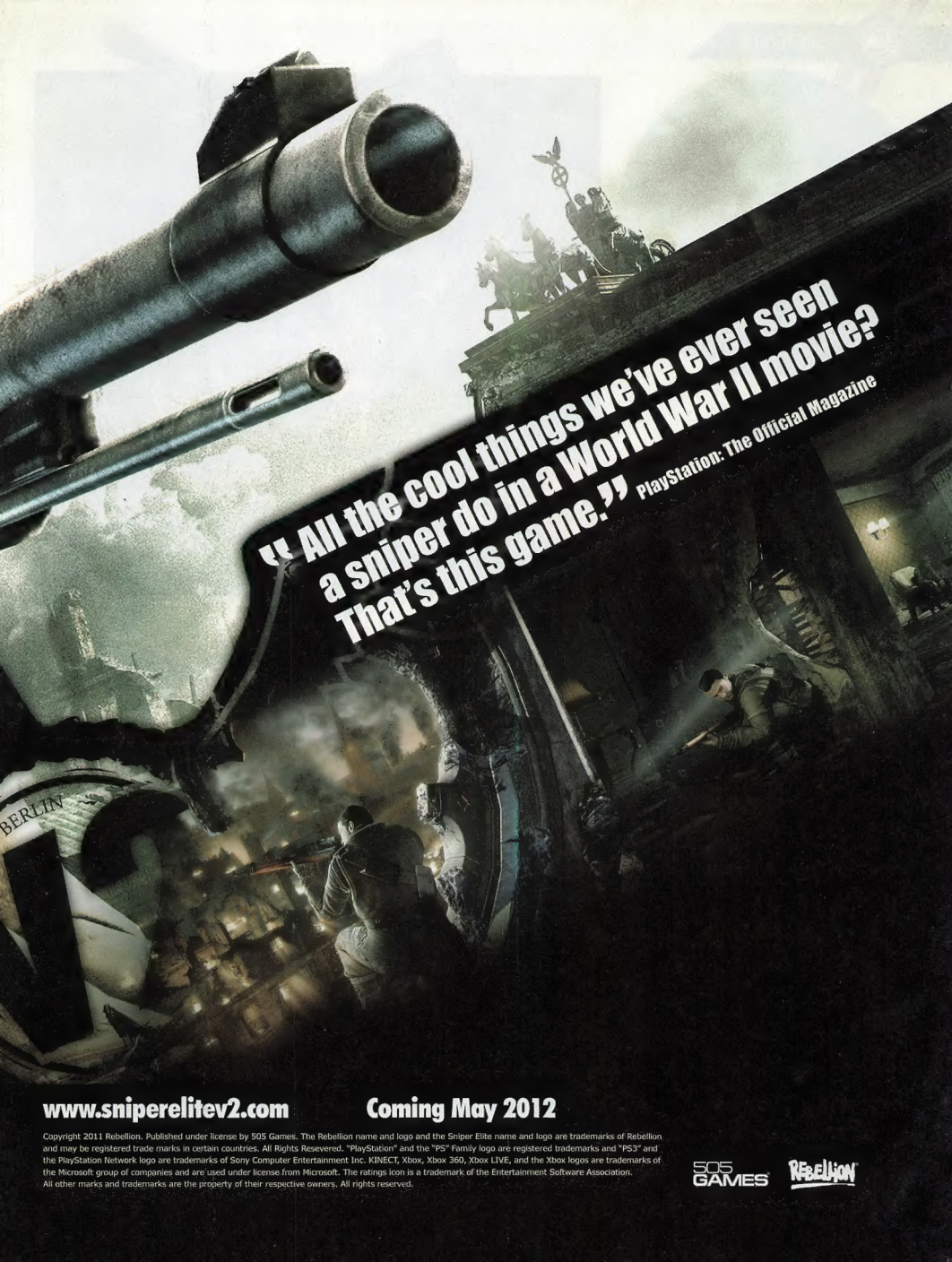


PS3



PlayStation Network

PC DVD
ROM



**"All the cool things we've ever seen
a sniper do in a World War II movie?
That's this game."**

PlayStation: The Official Magazine

www.sniperelitev2.com

Coming May 2012

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**505
GAMES**

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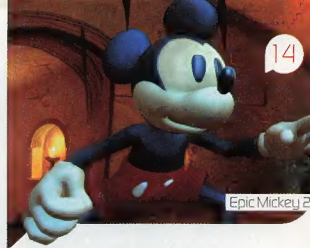
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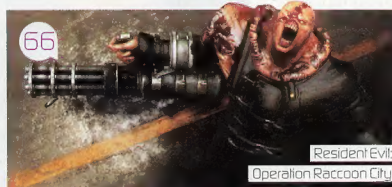
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MEET THE STAFF



Charlie Barratt Executive Editor
Charlie comes to @GAMER from the online realm—namely, our sister website, GamesRadar. We can't yet bear to tell him that we aren't running his "Top 5 Angry Birds Knock-Knock Jokes" story.



Ryan Taljonnick Associate Editor
Poor Ryan has endured so much in his short @GAMER tenure (since his move from PlayStation: The Official Magazine). If the designers' game of "Let's Nickname the New Associate Editor" didn't break him, nothing will.



Jenny Esdaile Art Director
While Andy hated asking Jenny to do 473 different mock-ups of this issue's cover, the results speak for themselves: The first multiple cover in @GAMER history is likely to be one we'll talk about for a long time.



Jillian Lungaro Designer
Jillian makes new contributor, staff, and Papercraft "blockheads." Her knack for nailing the little characters makes us wonder if she sees the world more geometrically. Her baked cylinders of bread may hold the answer.

Letter from the EDITOR

WELCOME TO

@GAMER



It's said, "the more things change, the more they stay the same." Without question, that fits @GAMER.

One change is within this box: William O'Neal, @GAMER's founding editor-in-chief, has moved over to our sister website, TechRadar. As a result, I've grabbed @GAMER's steering wheel—though you'll still see Wil's name here as a contributor.

To the left, you'll see two new names (and "blockhead" faces): Charlie Barratt, who joins the @GAMER staff as executive editor; and Ryan Taljonnick, who is our new associate editor. They're both gaming vets who'll make sure each issue is better than the last.

As for the "stay the same" part of the proverb, we still have the best team of designers putting the pages together. When next month brings @GAMER's twentieth issue, we might

be celebrating the addition of yet another design award to our shelves.

And, of course, another "same" is the quality game-related articles and information the @GAMER staff is proud to bring you with each issue. Thanks for joining us, and we hope you enjoy the ride.

Andy Eddy
Editor-in-Chief

QR CODES AND HOW THEY WORK

On some @GAMER pages you'll see a QR code. If you scan the symbol with a QR reader (or the Best Buy app for iPhone or Android) on your smartphone or tablet, you'll be taken to a trailer for the game you're reading about.



Staff

EDITORIAL

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Andy Eddy
EXECUTIVE EDITOR Charlie Barratt
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Ryan Taljonnick
CONTRIBUTORS Matt Cabral, David Chapman, Taylor Coake, Hilary Goldstein, Andrew Hayward, Nellie Johnson, George Jones, Anne Lewis, Nathan Mounier, William O'Neal, Susie Ochs, Chuck Osborn, Mike Repasz, Dennis Simeca, Ryan Scott, Timothy J. Seppala, Evan Shiamoon, David Wolinsky
COPY EDITOR Alexandra Hall
GROUP PRODUCTION MANAGER Debra Gulliole

ART

ART DIRECTOR Jenny Esdaile
DESIGNERS Jillian Lungaro, Rosemary Pinkham
PHOTOGRAPHER Samantha Berg

BUSINESS

GROUP ACQUISITION DIRECTOR David Barrow
VP MEDIA Ursula Moran
VP CONSUMER MEDIA Kelly Cotten

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Brenda Rushing: brushing@futureus.com
T. 336 492 2265
VP SALES AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Nathan Hunt: nhunt@futureus.com
C. 415 269 5402
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF SALES
Isaac Ugay: ugay@futureus.com
C. 714 381 3419

PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Michael Hollister
PRODUCTION MANAGER Larry Briseno
SENIOR PRINT ORDER COORDINATOR Jennifer Lim

CONSUMER MARKETING

CONSUMER MARKETING DIRECTOR
Stephanie Blake
NEWSSTAND DIRECTOR Bill Shevety
NEWSSTAND BUSINESS ANALYST Cheryl Stephenson
DIRECTOR OF eCOMMERCE AND FULFILLMENT
Lisa Radler
RETENTION MARKETING MANAGER Mike Hill



FUTURE US, INC.

4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400,
South San Francisco, CA 94080
www.futureus.com
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER Rachelle Considine
VP/COO John Sutton
HUMAN RESOURCES AND OFFICE SERVICES
MANAGER Eric Bulska

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REPRINTS: Future US, Inc., 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080
Phone: (800) 872-1842 Fax: (505) 872-2207
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FUTURE plc

30 Monmouth St., Bath, Avon, BA1 1BW, England
www.futureplc.com Tel: +44 1225 442244
NON-EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN Peter Allen
GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE Mark Wood
GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR Graham Harding



❖ I think the DLC thing has gone way too far. I know that game companies need to make money, but seriously making consumers pay for content already included on the disc that is "locked" until purchase is ridiculous. I remember when unlocks or new features/characters were rewards for actually playing the games, not for whipping out your wallet. Another problem with today's games is that most of them are released incomplete, which is another issue created by hungry developers and increased use of DLC.

—Sean G. via Facebook

ED: Well, Sean, this is a pretty hot-button issue over here in the @GAMER offices. The recent *Mass Effect 3* DLC controversy has us divided. On the one hand, BioWare stated from the get-go that From Ashes was developed separately and that its core files were the only bits included on the disc. On the other hand, we have no way of knowing if that was originally supposed to be a part of the main game or

not. Is it fair? Well, speak with your wallet. Luckily, there are plenty of DLC options that are worth your hard-earned cash: Minerva's Den for *BioShock 2*, Undeath Nightmare for *Red Dead Redemption*, and The Legend of Dead Kel for *Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning* are all excellent examples of DLC done right.

❖ I'm curious—what are your thoughts on *Mass Effect 3*'s ending? While I understand other gamers' frustrations with the ending, I don't get the huge uproar and the demand for BioWare to craft a new one. The creators of novels and movies don't bend to the will of fans when it comes to public outcry about how something went down, so why should game creators?

—Luke T. via email

ED: Hey Luke, Ryan here—I'm totally with you on this one. I got a late start on *Mass Effect 3*, and when I was nearing the end, I braced myself for what a good chunk of the Internet had convinced me would be an ugly, nonsensical mess that would disgust me to my

core. But this bad ending never came. In fact, I was rather okay with how the trilogy concluded. After three immensely enjoyable games, with more than 100 hours invested between them, I put down my controller and was fairly content. Was the ending lazy? I totally think so—but it wasn't bad. And if BioWare caves to its fans, that will undoubtedly set a precedent for developers in the future to do the same—and that's something I'd rather not see.

❖ What are your thoughts on the rumors that Sony and Microsoft will reveal their next line of consoles at this year's E3?

—Stan W. via email

ED: Honestly, Stan, we'd say the chances are pretty slim. Nintendo's got a leg up on the competition thanks to the Wii U, so that cat's already out of the bag. We suspect Sony will be too busy promoting the Vita to bother with a console announcement just yet, as a PS4 announce would likely hamstring Vita sales—and right now, Sony can't afford to let that happen. Perhaps Microsoft will bite, but we suspect we'll be at least one more year out from any major reveals.

Ninja Gaiden 3 Review Follow-up

After finally getting online with *Ninja Gaiden 3* I wasn't blown away. The deathmatches vs. other ninja were fun in small doses, but tended toward the chaotic. And *Ninja Trials* largely reiterated the same fights I wasn't so keen on in single-player. NG3's multiplayer is neat, but it doesn't raise my overall opinion of the game by a lot. —Alexandra Hall

CLAWS, DUDE!



GAMING TRENDS, 140 CHARACTERS AT A TIME

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TWEETER: RYAN TALJONICK TWITTER: @RYANTALJONICK

❖ Totally digging *Kid Icarus: Uprising*—controls are a bit tough to get used to at first, but it's fun once you get the hang of it!



TWEETER: ANDY EDDY TWITTER: @VIDGAMES

❖ I can see where *Draw Something* could be an obsession...if I had more games on my list. Right now, I'm waiting for everyone else to draw. —B



TWEETER: TAYLOR COCKE TWITTER: @TAYLORCOCKE

❖ There's a *Journey* joke somewhere in all the folks leaving thatgamecompany, but I'll leave it to a better man than me.



TWEETER: CHARLIE BARRATT TWITTER: @CHARLIEBARRATT

❖ Should be playing *Mass Effect 3*. Instead, replaying *Mass Effect 2* as Renegade...aka Punchin' Round the Galaxy.

Follow us!



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WANT TO HAVE YOUR SAY?

What are you playing? Do you like it? Do you hate it? Let other @GAMER readers know what you think—send in a 50- to 100-word review to reviews@atgamer.com, and we'll post em in each issue.

Submit your review to:
reviews@atgamer.com

MASS EFFECT 3

The epic conclusion to the *Mass Effect* series is bigger, bolder, and more intense than the last. Take the gameplay mechanics from the second installment and improve on that by making it quicker and more fluid. Many familiar faces return as well, and your actions from the previous games have consequences here. The presentation is stunning, and the story twists and turns are perfectly paced and executed. The pros at BioWare put together a heart-pounding masterpiece.

Score: 5/5
—Julian Z.

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Words: Andrew Hayward and Andy Eddy

Blips...

News, rumors, and game culture deconstructed

NEWS BITES

NINTENDO will release *Pokémon Black Version 2* and *Pokémon White Version 2* for Nintendo DS in North America sometime later this year.



DOUBLE FINE raised more than \$3.3 million via crowd-sourcing site Kickstarter to fund a new adventure game and documentary about its creation.



SONY will bring *The Ratchet & Clank HD Collection*—featuring the original PS2 action trilogy in high definition—to PlayStation 3 this fall.



BEST BUY BONUS

Lollipop Chainsaw

Pre-order *Lollipop Chainsaw* from BestBuy.com and you'll receive the unlockable Goth and Foxy Funk skins for the game on either PlayStation 3 or Xbox 360.

SIMCITY EXPANDS IN 2013

NEW CITY!



After a lengthy focus on *The Sims*, Maxis will return to the title that launched its Sim—(subject) run with next year's *SimCity* for PC. A proper follow-up to 2003's *SimCity 4*, the EA-published game will allow you to spawn your own urban centers and build them up with smart planning and steady upkeep—or watch them fail with careless moves and poor management.

What sets the new *SimCity* apart from past entries is its focus on social play. While

it can be played individually, as usual, the game also includes the ability to position cities within range of online friends, and try to subsist alongside each other without draining all of the resources or having one crummy city sour the bunch.

With sleek buildings and other bits powered by the new GlassBox engine, this new *SimCity* version looks to be a faithful revival of the beloved classic, and @GAMER will have a more in-depth preview before its 2013 release. @



THE RAPTR REPORT

What are the hottest games being played by Xbox 360 and PC gamers? Raptr.com has the answer.

BATTLEFIELD 3



- 1 Mass Effect 3
- 2 Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3
- 3 Battlefield 3
- 4 League of Legends
- 5 World of Warcraft
- 6 Gears of War 3
- 7 The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
- 8 FIFA Soccer 12
- 9 Halo: Reach
- 10 Call of Duty: Black Ops
- 11 Mass Effect 2
- 12 Team Fortress 2
- 13 Star Wars: The Old Republic
- 14 NBA 2K12
- 15 Forza Motorsports 4

ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM



INSIDE GOSSIP

MORE MINI NINJAS?

If a European trademark application and associated website URL are to be believed, Square Enix may be preparing another Mini Ninjas game. Purportedly titled *Mini Ninjas: Hiro's Adventure*, it would be the second entry following the original kid-friendly 2009 action game from Hitman-series developer IO Interactive. No word yet on platforms or an expected release date for the game.



IN THE WORKS

Weird Warriors \\\n Dynasty Warriors VS. for Nintendo 3DS will feature costumes based on beloved Nintendo heroes, such as Link and Samus Aran.

DON'T FORGET THE POPCORN!

AT THE MOVIES

Nintendo's top creature-collecting franchise spawns another anime film, while an absurdist comedy uses dancing games to solve gang warfare. Variety!



POKÉMON ANIME

The Pokémon train continues on in Japan, where Nintendo announced that the fifteenth animated feature film—titled *Pocket Monsters Best Wishes! The Movie: Kyurem vs. the Sacred Swordsman: Keldeo*—will be released in theaters this July, one month after *Pokémon Black and White Version 2* come out for Nintendo DS there.



THE FP

Here's something different: *The FP* is a fictional, futuristic farce in which warring gangs fight for control of the town of Frazier Park by playing "Beat Beat Revelation," an arcade dancing game clearly modeled after *Dance Dance Revolution*. The silly, R-rated comedy uses gaming in a unique way—and looks hilarious.

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

ACTIVISION BLIZZARD - SANTA MONICA, CA, USA



HOME BASE

Located near Los Angeles, Activision Blizzard's U.S. headquarters houses about 400 employees, including head management, public relations, marketing, legal, finance, and the teams that handle the *Call of Duty* and *Skylanders* franchises.

NERD WORDS

STARCRRAFT II



The next *Starcraft II* entry—*Heart of the Swarm*—is still off on the horizon, but die-hard fans of the real-time strategy smash can dig deeper into the universe with the novel, *Starcraft II: Devils' Due*. Designed as a prequel to the games, *Devils' Due* follows hero

Jim Raynor as he and partner Tychus Findlay go AWOL from the Heaven's Devils marine unit and its corrupt leader, opting to live the outlaw life as they steal from the Confederacy. Previously only released in hardcover, *Devils' Due* is available now in paperback for \$8.99.



Five Questions with...

CLAIM TO
FAME...
Author of
Critical Path



PHOTO: KATRIN ALCH

DAN AMRICH

Activision Blizzard's Social Media Manager

1 What's it like working on the publisher side after writing about games for years?

Very educational and a little weird. Some things worked as I suspected; other things were totally enlightening. And I always thought that Activision had a thick file about my past history and previous articles. First thing I said when I got here was, "Show me my file." Alas, there was no file. Or they lied to me and I don't have clearance to see it.

2 Why did you write *Critical Path: How to Review Videogames for a Living*?

When I was in the media, I always got the same question: "How do I get your job?" *Critical Path* is my 78,000-word stab at teaching the next generation what they should be doing to prepare for the realities and responsibilities that come with the job.

3 What's the biggest misconception about large game publishers?

That big publishers are evil. People assume the worst an awful lot of the time, and I think huge success breeds huge skepticism. But when I go into work every day, I see a lot of people working hard and working late to make their games successful, and not one of them is twirling their mustache while tying orphans to train tracks. More transparency from publishers and fewer snap judgments by gamers will help in the long run.

4 What excites you outside of gaming these days?

My two non-gaming passions have always been music and juggling. I make goofy gaming parody songs with a friend under the name *Palette-Swap Ninja*. And juggling gets me into that happy Zen place, even when I'm doing torches or knives.

5 What's your favorite part of being a social media manager?

Separating fact from fiction. I squash a lot of rumors and I clarify a lot of confusion on a daily basis, and I usually get to do it one-to-one on Facebook and Twitter. I find that immensely satisfying.

Blips...

More news, rumors, and game culture deconstructed

LITTLEBIGPLANET KARTING SPEEDS TO PS3



Adorable mascot characters and go-kart racing go hand in hand, as countless past games have demonstrated, and *LittleBigPlanet Karting* promises to be the next in a long line of such titles. Co-developed by original series creator Media Molecule and *ModNation Racers* maker

United Front Games, *LittleBigPlanet Karting* is set to debut on PlayStation 3 later this year, delivering a customizable action-oriented racing experience that maintains the style of the titular platform experience.

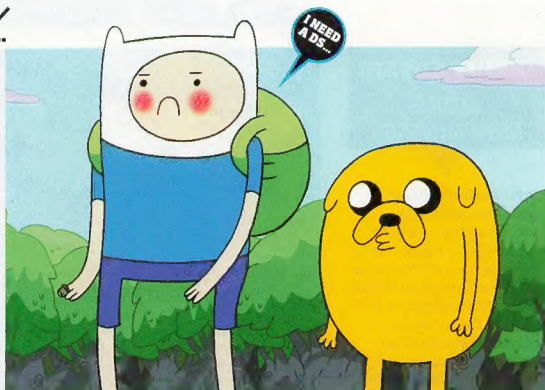
Based on what we've seen, *Karting* looks to deliver a perfect synthesis of both *LittleBigPlanet* and *ModNation Racers*, pairing the fabric and found object-based aesthetic of the former with the racing and creation mechanics of the latter. You'll be able to create and share your own tracks using the 3D level editor, but those who just want to play will have options including solo races, online battles, and four-player splitscreen events.

And the *LBP* flavor seems strongly integrated within the design, thanks to a grappling-hook ability and even side-scrolling racing stages that strongly recall the look of the action series. *LittleBigPlanet Karting* is due out this fall, and will include optional PlayStation Move support.



BALDUR'S GATE REVIVES ON PC, MAC, AND IPAD

Long before *Mass Effect*, BioWare was best known for its *Baldur's Gate* series of PC fantasy role-playing games, and the first two entries will be enhanced and released for both PC, Mac, and iPad this year. Developed by Overhaul Games and published by Atari, the *Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition* will include the full original game and *Tales of the Sword Coast* expansion pack, with updated visuals and fresh content, plus a price tag pegged at less than \$10. The first entry is due out this summer, while sequel *Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn* will follow later in the year.



NINTENDO DS PREPARING FOR ADVENTURE TIME

Immensely creative Cartoon Network animated hit *Adventure Time* will be turned into a videogame later this year, courtesy of WayForward Technologies, which is bringing the series to the original Nintendo DS. *Adventure Time* follows excitable young Finn and his super-powered dog, Jake, as the pair explore a land filled with bizarre sights. WayForward is responsible for such colorful titles as *A Boy and His Blob*, *Contra 4*, and *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*, and series creator Pendleton Ward is reportedly working closely with the developer on the adaptation.

BATTLEFIELD 3 GETS RENTED SERVERS

Initially a PC-exclusive feature, Electronic Arts and DICE recently revealed that the console versions of first-person shooter *Battlefield 3* will also offer you the ability to rent dedicated servers for a certain period of time. Starting at \$1.49 for a day and extending out to \$64.99 for 90 days, the dedicated servers allow you to customize the rules of the experience and make other decisions—something that is totally new on the console side. And with three premium content packs for the game on the horizon, they're sure to be a hot commodity for fans on all platforms.



➔ MASS EFFECT 3 ...



▲ "I don't want to have to shoot you making me feel like I'm killing you."

ENDINGS SPAWN UPROAR

During the game's final mission, a group of Mass Effect 3 players expressed displeasure about the final ending, claiming it felt like a "cheap" release in early March.

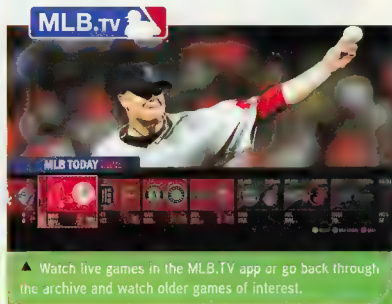
Some fans felt that the ending was too "cheap" and "lacked in detail," expecting more from the game's story. However, others praised the ending for its emotional impact and the way it tied up the game's loose ends.

Players also expressed concern about the game's ending, feeling that it was too "cheap" and "lacked in detail."

As the game's ending, the game's story was tied up in a way that many fans felt was "cheap" and "lacked in detail." However, others praised the ending for its emotional impact and the way it tied up the game's loose ends.

XBOX 360 MEETS BATTER'S BOX

Microsoft will continue to evolve the Xbox 360's non-gaming media offerings with the launch of the MLB.TV app at the start of the baseball season. The app enables fans to create a list of favorite teams to follow, then jump into watching any of the more than 2000 games that'll air during the season. The app will feature speedy navigation via controller or Kinect voice commands, and even an Xbox-exclusive two-game split-screen feature. Access to MLB.TV is \$124.99 per season for Xbox Live Gold members, but Microsoft and MLB promise to offer a free game per day that any Xbox 360 owner can watch.



▲ Watch live games in the MLB.TV app or go back through the archive and watch older games of interest.

ZYNCA SNAGS DRAW SOMETHING



One of the biggest iPhone and Facebook sensations in recent memory, Draw Something, is now the property of casual publishing giant Zynga, as the company bought developer OMGPOP for the reported sum of \$180 million.

Released in early February, the multiplayer drawing game—in which one player sketches out a word's interpretation while the other tries to guess what it is—collected more than 20 million downloads within weeks, prompting the offer from Zynga. Most of the existing employees will remain with OMGPOP, which plans to add text chat capabilities to the game in an upcoming update.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE 2 GOES FREE-TO-PLAY

Sega recently revealed that Phantasy Star Online 2, the sequel to the beloved online role-playing hit, will be released on multiple platforms and sport a free-to-play business model. The game, which is set for release on both PC and PlayStation Vita—with iOS and Android apps that tie into the bigger releases—will not require a purchase or monthly fee to play, though you can enhance your experience by spending money on items within the game. Developed by Sonic Team, Phantasy Star Online 2 is set to launch later this year in Japan, while the North American release is still to be determined.



FREE TO PLAY!



Words: Susie Ochs



Featured Game

AVIAN FLEW

All out-of-this-world sequel that shows those birds are angrier than me.



ANGRY BIRDS SPACE HD

Platforms:

\$2.99, Rovio Mobile, space.angrybirds.com

Birds in spaaaaace! It's an entirely new twist on the tired Angry Birds mechanic, rocketing the App Store's most popular game ever right back to the top. The cowardly pigs are camping in spherical atmospheres, and when you shoot a bird into one, its path will curve. If you start outside an atmosphere and miss it completely, your bird just flies off in a straight trajectory into the vastness of space—no gravity to bring you down. You'll be curving birds from one atmosphere to another, whizzing in orbits around pig-occupied planets, and even shooting birds in both directions from the slingshot.

Curved trajectories are fun to play with.

▼ Mmm, videogamey.



THE SIMPSONS TAPPED OUT

Platforms:

Free, EA, ea.com

Farmville, yawn. The Smurfs Village? Meh. But all of us who grew up loving the Simpsons will woo-hoo at the chance to rebuild Springfield and complete quests to unlock and level up the characters. Real-time missions and daily check-in rewards give you reason to come back, and it's the rare social game that's still fun if you refuse to spam all your friends. The graphics and voices are spot-on, too.

▼ Copy that, Gold Leader.



FLIGHT CONTROL ROCKET

Platforms:

\$0.99, Firemint/EA, firemint.com

Speaking of things in spaaaaace, Flight Control Rocket is a new spin on the familiar draw-a-path-to-land-planes mechanic of Flight Control. You're docking waves of tiny spaceships aboard a mother-ship, not to mention emptying aircraft carriers, bringing in formations, and, of course, keeping everything from crashing. With 15 kinds of ships total, you'll have your hands full.

▼ March, fight, repeat.



RUNE RAIDERS

Platforms:

\$1.99, Retro64, retro64.com

It's a simple yet satisfying entry into turn-based strategy. You choose a party of upgradeable heroes, then march across a grid-like level battling orcs and minotaurs while collecting gold and power-ups and avoiding total party annihilation. As you progress through the game's levels, the enemy formations get tougher, and you'll need to experiment with your own character mix and attack strategy to keep moving forward.

▼ Poor art saved by good guessing.



DRAW SOMETHING

Platforms:

\$0.99, OMGPOP, omgpop.com

This über-addictive, runaway success is a must-play even if you think you can't draw. Choose the easy, medium, or hard word, draw it, and your partner will guess while watching your masterpiece being redrawn stroke by stroke. It's perfect on an iPad, but universal for iPhone and Android, too. And it'll probably single-handedly inspire more stylus purchases than any other app.

♥ Boxy platformer is boxy.



SUPER LEMONADE FACTORY

Platforms: \$1.99, Initials Command, superlemonadefactory.initialscommand.com

If you dig old-school platformers and quirky presentations, check out *Super Lemonade Factory*. Newlyweds Liselot and Andre inherited a lemonade factory, but must win over the surly employees. You guide the pair through each hazardous 8-bit level, either separately or riding each other's shoulders. It's a little finicky, but if you are patient enough to endure dying over and over, it's just weird enough to work.



♥ Sam's going down.



BITTER SAM

Platforms: \$0.99, Moon Active, bittersam.com

Sam is dressed sorta like Max from *Where the Wild Things Are*, and being lowered down an endless shaft like Ray in *Ghostbusters*. And, for some reason, he's bitter. Maybe it's because this tilt-your-tablet game feels slightly reminiscent of physics puzzler classic *Cut the Rope*, but minus the rope cutting. (Rope cutting in this game spells certain doom.) This universal iPhone/iPad app has 100 levels, with more on the way.



Play prettier on the new iPad

RESOLICIOUS

Ooh...
so HD!

The big news since our last issue is of course the "new iPad," aka iPad 3, and its gorgeous, 2048x1536 Retina display. These 10 games are the best ones to have to show off that screen to your drooling friends—if you already have them, be sure to update them, and if you haven't gotten them yet...now is the time.



SKY GAMBLERS: AIR SUPREMACY (\$4.99, namco.com/cps)

So pretty it was featured in Apple's keynote announcing the new iPad, this air combat sim layers on the special effects, like HDR, refractive raindrops, even heat blur from jet engines.



MASS EFFECT INFILTRATOR (\$6.99, ea.com)

EA rolled up a brand-new *Mass Effect* storyline in this universal app, and it's got tons of eye candy for the new iPad, but it's perfectly playable on older iOS hardware, too.



DROER & CHAOS ONLINE (\$6.99, gamebloft.com)

This MMORPG is so vast and epic you might forget you're playing on a handheld device. Combat is satisfying, the characters balanced, and it looks marvelous.



REAL RACING 2 HD (\$6.99, firemint.com)

Firemint's ultra-realistic racing sim got another layer of graphical va-va-voom with a recent update, including 4x anti-aliasing and the ability to take high-res "photos."



SHADOWGUN (\$4.99, madfingergames.com)

A good shooter is always satisfying, and *Shadowgun* feels like playing on a console, with detailed environments, impressive lighting effects, and plenty of third-person running and gunning as a professional bounty hunter in the year 2350.



JOINING HANDS (\$1.99, 10tois.com)

Casual games can be pretty too, and this universal, hexagonal puzzler harnesses the new iPad's graphical powers of cuteness. Oh, yeah...it's on Android and webOS as well.



ASPHALT 6: ADRENALINE HD (\$0.99, gamebloft.com)

The latest update to this jaw-dropping racing game pushes the limits of the new iPad's quad-core graphics—and lets you drive a Ferrari Enzo or DeLorean DMC-12, among other sweet rides.



INFINITY BLADE II (\$6.99, infinitybladegame.com)

The Unreal Engine is aptly named and *Infinity Blade II* shows why. Swing huge swords in epic battles across highly detailed environments. A must-have for showing off your new iPad.



MODERN COMBAT 3: FALLEN NATION (\$6.99, gamebloft.com)

This universal FPS has fantastic 12-player multiplayer modes, and its latest update enhances the graphics for the new Retina Display, taking the gritty warzones to the next level.



TOUCHGRIND BMX (\$4.99, illusionlabs.com)

A game where you execute bike tricks with two fingers seems like goofy fun, but *Touchgrind's* beautiful environments are serious business. The spot-on physics make it a must-own.

CALENDAR

MAY 2012

Game Release Date ■ The @GAMER Podcast! ▶ This day in videogame history...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
01 Gravety Rush: Lollipop Chainsaw: The Secret World: Darksiders II: Spec Ops: The Line:	02 Sniper Elite V2	03 04 05 CINCO DE MAYO	06 07 08 09 10 11 12	13 14 15 16 17 18 19	20 21 22 23 24 25 26	27 28 29 30 31
06 07 08 09 10 11 12	13 14 15 16 17 18 19	20 21 22 23 24 25 26	27 28 29 30 31	01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12	13 14 15 16 17 18 19	20 21 22 23 24 25 26
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ENTER TO WIN
A WARHEAD 7.1!



DISNEY EPIC MICKEY 2: THE POWER OF TWO

Welcome back to Wasteland! • Words: Matt Cabral

When it came out in 2010, *Epic Mickey* seemed to be a Disney geek's dream. In addition to starring the main Mouse himself, it was set in Wasteland—a twisted take on Disneyland populated by classic characters, theme-park attractions, and countless other fan-pleasing call-outs. But while its wildly imaginative world had the mouse ear-wearing masses singing Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah, its occasionally clunky camera and cumbersome controls left many gamers as mad as a hatter. Thankfully, with the recently revealed *Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two*, legendary designer Warren Spector and his Junction Point team plan on fixing the original's flaws, while retaining its appealing Disney-fied formula.

As in Mickey's first Wasteland-wandering adventure, you will again wield his magical paint brush. Unleashing streams of paint and thinner, you'll draw and erase objects, befriend and battle baddies, and generally turn the eye-popping world into your own canvas. However, thanks to the sequel's refined controls, more persistent effects, and a much-improved perspective—Spector cites “1,000 specific changes” made to the camera—you'll leverage the power of paint (and thinner) like never before.

Of course, *Epic Mickey 2* wouldn't be a proper sequel if it simply improved upon its predecessor's mechanics. So, while Junction Point is tweaking where needed, it's also sprinkling the sequel with plenty of game-changing pixie dust. As the subtitle playfully implies, the

ability to tackle Wasteland alongside a Disney-appreciating pal is the most significant addition. Assuming the role of Oswald the Lucky Rabbit—Walt Disney's first successful cartoon creation and the original game's most significant non-playable character—a couch-sharing buddy can drop in or out of the action at anytime.

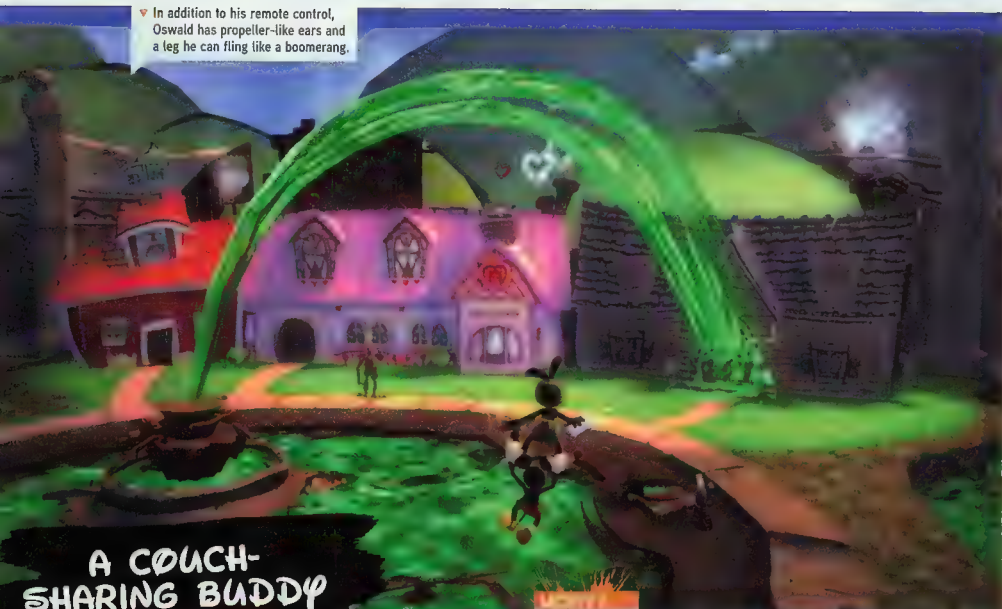
Armed with an electricity-spitting remote control, Oswald supports Mickey in combat and puzzle-solving. During my demo, for example, he charged thinner-draining pumps—which Mickey first had to move into place—to reveal a hidden passage beneath a pool of the life-sucking liquid; he also stunned bad guys with his shocking gadget, setting Mickey up to finish them off. While I got just a teaser of the improved gameplay and co-op focus, I have a feeling fans are in for a magical time when *Epic Mickey 2* casts its spell later this year. ☺



Lucky Rabbit: Fans are finally let loose in Wasteland as Mickey's floppy-eared friend.

Magical Mouse: Mickey's paint-and-thinner mechanics are nicely complemented by Oswald's electricity-spewing powers.

♥ In addition to his remote control, Oswald has propeller-like ears and a leg he can fling like a boomerang.



A COUCH-SHARING BUDDY CAN DROP IN OR OUT



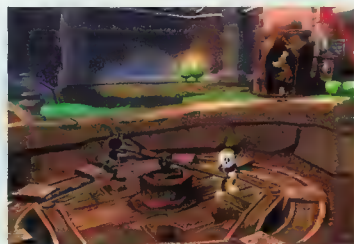
MICKEY MOUTH \

Taking a cue from such classic Nintendo series as *The Legend of Zelda*, *Epic Mickey*'s characters didn't speak. Instead, they sort of grunted and barked while on-screen text translated their mumbled musings. For *Epic Mickey 2*, however, Spector and his team decided to give Mickey—and the rest of the cast—a voice. Thanks to talented actors, familiar franchise faves like Gus the Gremlin and The Mad Doctor will now be able to chat up Mickey and his pals. Even Oswald, who's never spoken in his 80-plus year career, will be granted the gift of speech by veteran voice actor Frank Welker.

Camera and control issues aside, the original *Epic Mickey*'s biggest problem was it could only be enjoyed on the Nintendo Wii. The sequel thankfully addresses this, again appearing on the family-friendly console, but also sharing the drenched-in-Disney magic with PS3 and Xbox 360 owners. In addition to allowing core gamers to feel the power of paint and thinner from behind a proper gamepad, this also means Mickey's next trip to Wasteland will be presented in eye-pleasing high-definition.



▲ Paint and thinner have more permanent effects, thanks to *Epic Mickey 2*'s persistent world.



▲ Those preferring to tackle Wasteland on their own will be joined by an AI-controlled Oswald.



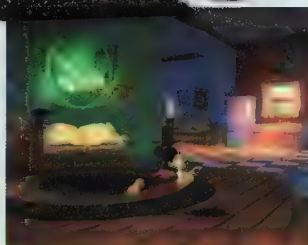
EDGE SINGS

Spector and his team remain pretty tight-lipped when discussing *Epic Mickey 2* story specifics, but still spilled a few tantalizing tidbits. While the game returns you to Wasteland, the misfit Magic Kingdom's landscape has been altered by environment-changing earthquakes. Additionally, new areas, such as one based on Frontierland, will join fresh interpretations of previously visited worlds.

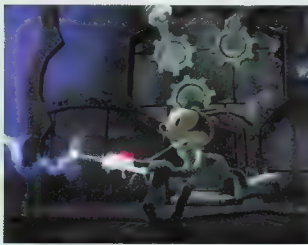
The game begins with Oswald recruited by returning baddie, The Mad Doctor, who claims to have reformed. More interesting, though, the psycho scientist expresses his change of heart through a showstopping song-and-dance number. Apparently Spector's love of musicals significantly shaped *Epic Mickey 2*'s storytelling, as the narrative's driven by song-belted cut-scenes. Elaborating on the concept—which, I must say, seems to perfectly capture the Disney spirit—Spector enthusiastically states, "It's the first musical comedy game in the history of videogames." Could an *Epic Mickey* Broadway production be far behind?



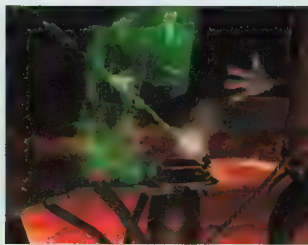
▲ Shaping the world around you is still a literal paint-shooting blast.



▲ Mickey relearns his *Epic* skills in the sequel's opening tutorial-focused moments.



▲ Oswald's mysterious remote packs its own enemy-thwarting, puzzle-solving powers.



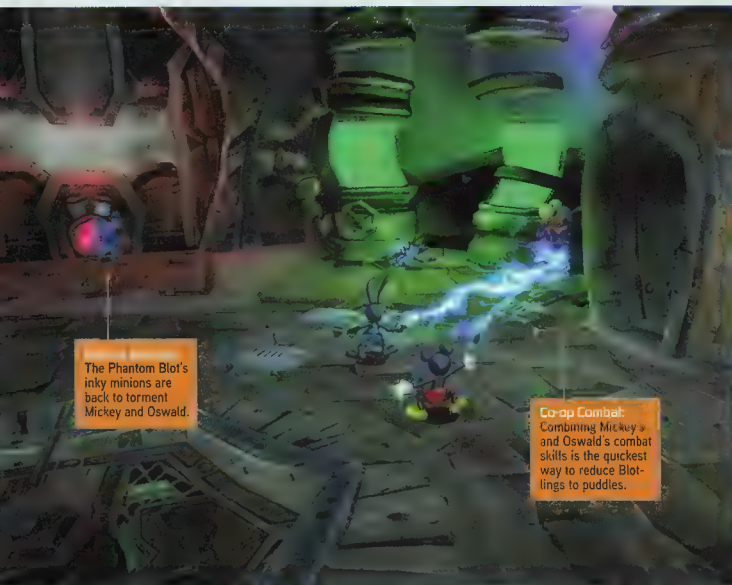
▲ Side-scrolling, 2D levels, complete with their own puzzle and platforming challenges, make a return.

Mickey's jump to PS3 and Xbox 360 brings him to life in glorious HD.



BRAND-NEW BADDIES

FACING FRESH FOES \\ *Epic Mickey's* inspired enemies included Blotlings, the inky minions of the game's big bad Phantom Blot, and Beetleworx, creepy robots constructed of discarded Disney-themed items and memorabilia. While the sequel will add to these existing enemy ranks, it's also introducing the Blotworx, a menacing mash-up of Blotlings and Beetleworx, these disturbing new denizens of Wasteland will display the former's dripping blackness as well as the latter's animatronic patchwork.



The Phantom Blot's inky minions are back to torment Mickey and Oswald.

Co-op Combat: Combining Mickey and Oswald's combat skills is the quickest way to reduce Blotlings to puddles.

PS3 XBOX360 Wii

GAME DETAILS



DISNEY EPIC MICKEY 2: THE POWER OF TWO

INFO

Publisher: Disney Interactive Studios
Developer: Junction Point
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii

RELEASE DATE

Holiday 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

2-player co-op split-screen

GENRE

Platformer

SUITABLE FOR

Cartoon geeks, platformer fans, former Imagineers

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Despite its flaws, the original *Epic Mickey* is a magical time no Disney fan should miss.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two*.



WHAT'S GREAT

- ♥ Drenched in Disney detail
- ♥ Couch co-op
- ♥ Improved camera, controls

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT

- ✗ Can the former Wii-exclusive franchise play with the hi-def big boys?



SLY COOPER: THIEVES IN TIME

The PS2 era's greatest stealth-platformer returns • Words: Mikel Reparaz

"IT LOOKS,
FEELS, AND
SOUNDS LIKE
A SLY GAME
SHOULD..."

It's been seven years since the last Sly Cooper adventure, and in that time Sly and his cohorts have drifted away from their lives of crime. That changes when gadget-master Bentley—who has retired to work on a time machine—notifies that pages from the Thievius Raccoonus, Sly's ancient family tome of thieving knowledge, have started to disappear right in front of him. Clearly time travel has something to do with it, so Bentley rounds up the gang for one more caper, this time through history.

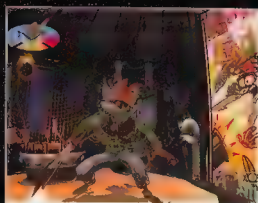
I recently had a brief hands-on with *Thieves in Time*, and I'm happy to report that it feels like a Sly game should, with tightly responsive, acrobatic platforming married to light stealth elements. Playing first as ninja Rioichi Cooper, one of Sly's ancestors, I crept around Rioichi's enormous sushi restaurant, which had been taken over by patrolling thugs. Success here meant keeping high and out of sight, which necessitated a lot of shimmying up plants and other tall structures, and using Rioichi's Leaping Dragon ability to rapidly hop between distant points undetected (which came in handy for crossing the numerous laser traps on the floor).

As in earlier games, you can land and balance on tiny points with ease (and the press of a button), and opportunities for stealthy antics—such as

sidling across narrow ledges—were marked by sparkles. Attacking the guards was an option, but since detection would sound an alarm, subduing them required a tricky, one-hit-kill move. Instead, I stayed sneaky, picking their pockets for keys.

The demo's second half was far less sneaky. Here, I played as Sly once again, out to rescue his knightly ancestor Sir Galleth from the insane heights of a medieval circus. There were no guards to worry about here; instead, I just had to worry about dodging cannons and jets of fire, and getting across swinging trapezes. The circus was also an opportunity to try out one of Sly's new, ability-granting disguises: that of a Robin Hood-looking archer that could use strategically placed baskets full of remote-controlled arrows to fire tightropes from one platform to another.

Taking Sly's deep family tree into account, *Thieves in Time* could easily wind up being the biggest entry in the series—and I don't make this claim lightly, especially considering former Sly developer Sucker Punch is no longer in charge of our favorite raccoon's future. From what I played, it looks, feels, and sounds like a Sly game should (thanks to the return of the original voice cast). With new developer Sanzaru at the helm, that counts for a lot. ☺



PLAYING DRESS-UP \\\

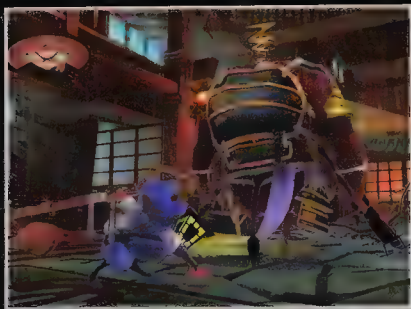
While the cast of playable characters looks like it's going to be fairly large, Sly has a few new tricks of his own, most notably disguises that grant him new abilities, including a gypsy outfit that slows time and an archer costume that lets him fire rope arrows. These costumes will also open up earlier parts of the game that were previously inaccessible for some Metroid-style exploration.



▲ **BACK IN ACTION** Sly Cooper ended his last game by (possibly) faking amnesia and going to work for the good guys, but *Thieves in Time* sees him returning to his criminal past with iconic mask, cap, and cane intact.

SLY'S THIEVING FAMILY TREE

In addition to Sly and Murray, it turns out we'll also have a chance to play as some of Sly's ancestors. Two have been confirmed so far: ninja sushi chef Rioichi Cooper and medieval knight Sir Galleth. They'll be deeply flawed when Sly meets them, though, so a big part of his job will be setting history right by helping them to become the giants of larceny they're meant to be. I can't help but wonder how many ancestors Sly will have. How frequently do raccoons reproduce, anyway?



▲ Carefully timed use of Rioichi's Leaping Dragon ability is key here.

FOCUS

GAMEPLAY



THE BRAWN

Once again, Sly's hippo friend Murray is playable, and his strength will be essential for lifting heavy objects out of the way and getting Sly through tight spots. Thank goodness for hippos, as I always say.



READY, AIM...

Sly's new archer costume isn't just for show—it lets him shoot arrows, which he uses to string tightropes between platforms. If that target looks a little hard to hit, don't worry—the arrows can be remote-controlled in flight.

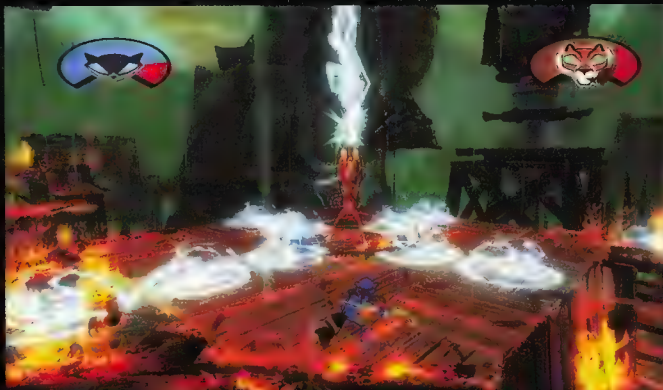
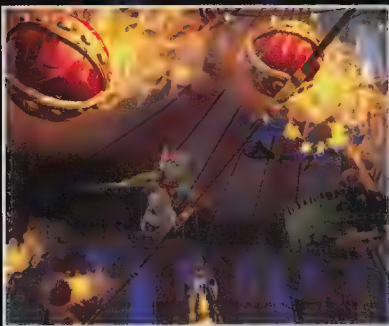
PAST CAPERS

Sly Cooper comes from a long line of thieves, who steal only from other thieves. In the first game, he avenged his parents by finding the pieces of the stolen Thievlus Raccoonus and killing a centuries-old monster named Clockwerk (who returned in Sly 2). In 2005's Sly 3, his last big heist left him with apparent amnesia. It's questionable as to whether or not his amnesia is real, though. With his gang disbanded, Sly now works alongside his former nemesis, Inspector Carmelita Fox, and the stage is set for another adventure...



WHO'S IN CHARGE? \\\

Longtime Sly fans will have noticed that developer Sucker Punch is no longer in the driver's seat, but the series appears to be in good hands with Sanzaru. Headed by a group of Sly fans, the company originally approached Sony to pitch a sequel, but first had to prove itself by porting the first three games to PS3 with *The Sly Collection*—which was excellent.



▲ **THE BOSS** So far, we've only seen one major villain appear in *Thieves in Time*: El Jefe, a time-traveling tiger who, in the game's first revealed boss fight, requires Sly to don a fireproof set of samurai armor before he can be defeated.

GAME DETAILS



SLY COOPER: THIEVES IN TIME

INFO

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: Sanzaru Games
Platforms: PS3

RELEASE DATE

Fall 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Action-platformer

SUITABLE FOR

Platformer fans who like a little stealth with their jumping

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



A perfect HD beautification of Sly's past exploits, *The Sly Collection* is a must-own for Sly fans.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Successfully recaptures the feel of earlier *Sly* games
- ♥ Presence of playable ancestors suggests a widely varied game

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Gruff-voiced ninja sushi chef Rioichi is kind of an over-the-top Japanese stereotype
- ✖ Can a new team really replicate Sly's unique spirit?

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN



Baddy longlegs •
Words: Evan Shamoon

Slated for release in unison with the upcoming film of the same name (which comes out July 3), *The Amazing Spider-Man* transforms nearly the entirety of New York City into Peter Parker's oyster. As in *Batman: Arkham City*, the expansive metropolis makes for a sprawling playground. The game picks up where the movie ends, giving the designers plenty of freedom in everything from plot to supervillain cameos.

And that's not the only reasonable point of comparison. "We took a lot of inspiration from the new realistic direction the film franchise is going," says Beenox producer Stéphane Gravel,

pointing to its mechanically credible web-shooters as an example. Combat is clearly inspired by *Rocksteady's* opus as well, with *Shattered Dimensions'* button-bashing replaced with set-piece brawls. Enemies come at you from every angle, meaning the timing of your strikes and counters becomes not only key, but also quite cinematic.

For traversal, the camera has been zoomed

in more tightly on Spider-Man compared to previous games. "At first, many people in the team didn't believe it was possible to create a cool

web-swinging system with a camera that was so close to the character," Gravel says. They succeeded, however, and the result is an experience that feels significantly more engaging, in part because of how it dovetails with one of the game's other big pillars: Web Rush.

**YOU CAN EXPECT
PLENTY OF
SIDE QUESTING...**

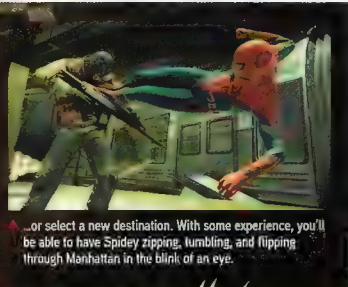


◀ The Spidey team met with the filmmakers to ensure the game respected the tone of the universe.

SPIDER-MAN \\\ Beenox worked with Marvel and Sony to update the bad guys. Rhino is a cross-species hybrid (not a guy in a rubber suit), and Iguana is rather animalistic. "We were not only creating a game that was an epilogue to the movie; we also had the chance to reinvent some classic Marvel villains [for the] new universe," Gravel says.



◀ Web Rush lets you move faster in order to make tactical decisions in combat and movement—web-strike an enemy, grab an object in order to stun multiple opponents...



◀ ...or select a new destination. With some experience, you'll be able to have Spidey zipping, lumbing, and flipping through Manhattan in the blink of an eye.

Essentially, Web Rush lets you move faster through the world; when engaged, silhouettes of Spider-Man pop up onscreen, indicating safe locations for him to travel. Once an option is selected, a single button press executes a series of acrobatic moves en route to the desired spot, with the engine generating a path by analyzing his surroundings. Spin around an antenna, run on top of a billboard, or flip onto a lamp post and stick the landing like only Spider-Man can. "We wanted to give players the adrenaline rush of what it would feel like to be Spidey, diving from high buildings and shooting a web to swing up from the ground at the last minute, or zipping from point to point throughout the city with acrobatic agility and speed," Gravel says.

With the open world, you can also expect plenty of side questing: muggings, collectable items, and one-off mini missions that have you working alongside the cops to bring down perps. There are even extreme sports-like challenges for the adrenaline junkies—just don't hang too loose, bro. 🕸

Old Friends
Beenox has brought back several of Spidey's classic villains.



GAME DETAILS 12



THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

INFO

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Beenox
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE

June 29, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Action

SUITABLE FOR

Aspiring superheroes, parkour pros, arachnophobics

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Great level design and fun

combat make
Spider-Man:
Shattered
Dimensions worth
a revisit.



WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *The Amazing Spider-Man*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ An open world is the perfect playground for Spidey, and the swinging is already looking fun
- ♥ Much more gameplay variety

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ *Edge of Time* wasn't great, so there's some making up to do
- ✖ Lacks the rich urban atmosphere that made *Arkham City* so impressive

▼ There's a lot going on around you, but you need to focus—and stay out of your enemy's view.

SNIPER: GHOST WARRIOR 2

If you agree that "happiness is a warm gun," you'll be really happy in June. —Words: Andy Eddy

You have to imagine the life of a sniper is filled with mixed emotions, with periods of patience, waiting, and analyzing, followed by moments of anticipation and exhilaration. While I'm sure you'll find those same feelings—albeit in different measures—when you play *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2*, the makers are throwing in a lot more to liven it up, so there's less chance you'll end up idle or bored.

The first game, which came out almost two years ago, was panned by critics (and got a 3 out of 5 in *IGN*'s July/August 2010 issue), but still sold two million worldwide, according to publisher/developer City Interactive. However, the development team at City

paid attention to media criticism and player feedback, then turned that into a list of improvements to implement in the sequel, which is due out in June. Among the changes: City confirmed that there'll be more "run-and-gun" sections in *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2*, which will add to the excitement and anxiety you'll experience. Also, the first game's AI adversaries were deemed by players to be too unrealistic, so City is making their actions more authentic and...well, smarter.

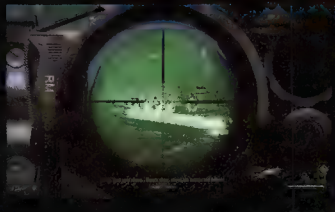
And for a game with "Sniper" in the title, players complained that there weren't enough long-distance shots in the original, so City is including more in the sequel. Of course,

"bullet cam" will return, rewarding you with an animation that shows the lead's trajectory toward—and into—the target.

A new feature in *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2* is the inclusion of stealth kills. If you're able to sneak up on an enemy, you'll be able to dispatch him after an onscreen prompt. In the course of demonstrating the game, City offered assurances that there'll be a wide variety of stealth kill animations, so you won't get bored of that either.

With all this (and more, including the ability to move into cover), *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2* will hopefully be worth (wait for it...) scoping out next month. **B**

only with "Subject" in the title using your email and the same date. For an easy to read and fully interactive Subject, check "Winter 2 from AOE General" (Super Game 12). Then, after you've made a plan, make a few additional "linked" posts. You can post a photo, or a link to a site that has more info, but these are different kinds of evidence, if you look forward to the results of new subject games, this will be your Subject.



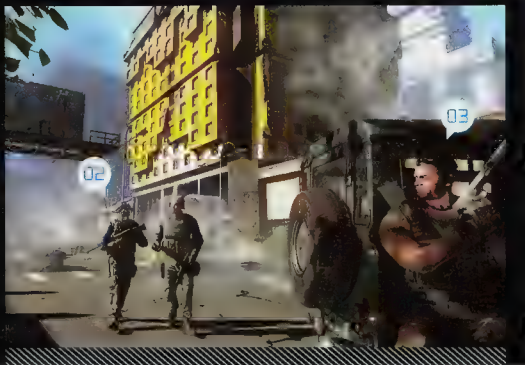
An aerial photograph of a traditional Chinese village. A prominent white-walled building with a dark roof is visible in the lower left. A large, dark, cylindrical structure, possibly a well or a large pot, stands in the foreground. The village is surrounded by lush greenery and trees.

TAKING ADVANTAGE \\\

When the mission—and your life—are on the line, it's good to be holding a beefy weapon.

Tagging is a great way to follow enemy movement, even if he leaves your line of sight.

Being a good sniper isn't always about being in a tall tower or far away from your target.



GAME DETAILS



INFO

Publisher: City Interactive
Developer: City Interactive
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE

June 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Yes, but details TBD

GENRE

First-person shooter

SUITABLE FOR

Stealth killers looking for opportunities to take out bad guys

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Might as well get yourself in the right frame of mind. Try *Sniper Elite V2* (see review on page 70).

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2*.



- ♥ Bullet cam returns
- ♥ Some run-and-gun action sequences added

♥ CryEngine foundation makes it look great

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Purists might not like that you can tag enemies to help you track them

BANDFUSE: ROCK LEGENDS

A new guitar game hopes to strike a chord with players • Words: Andy Eddy

There hasn't been a new *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band* release for a while now, but there are still those who think the music-game genre is viable. That's why Mastiff and new development studio Realta Entertainment are joining forces to bring *BandFuse: Rock Legends* out later this year.

If you're used to *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band* and their respective plastic axes, you'll need new gear to play *BandFuse*. It requires an actual guitar, which is easily connected to your Xbox 360 console with a USB-to-1/4-inch cable (much like Ubisoft's *RockSmith* did with its release last year). From there, you can then play along with songs in a solo career mode or get together with up to three friends to play in the game's multiplayer modes.

Not long ago, I tried an early version of the game software, which is still in development, starting with Coldplay's "Yellow" at the lowest difficulty setting. Novice. It indeed was simple, making me only play single notes throughout the tune. Step up through Beginner, Intermediate, and

Advanced, though, and you'll start getting multiple notes and chords, as well as some more intricate solo riffs you need to track to get good scores. Your play is scored on two facets: proper pitch and proper timing on notes played. By judging across both, it should help you learn how to play better and in time with the music.

One of the game's coolest aspects is that you can just jam through the software, tweak your sound with pedal-style effects and authentic amplifier sound, and record your part to check out later. Additionally, you'll also be able to share it with friends through Xbox Live and on social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter.

While Ubisoft did somewhat the same thing with *RockSmith* in 2011, connecting real-guitar owners to their game consoles, *BandFuse* seems to be a well-thought-out evolution of the genre with some differences that set it apart from its main competitor. @GAMER will bring you a full assessment of the game in a review when we get our hands on a finished version. ☺



KEEPING TABS ON YOUR PART



SIX-STRING SHORTHAND

BandFuse's "charts" scroll onscreen as the music plays, and experienced musicians will recognize their resemblance to guitar tablature. A "tab" file breaks down chord and note fingerings in a song to numbers that indicate which fret(s) on what string(s) should be played at any given point.



TRACK RECORD



One of the new *BandFuse* features is that 50 songs will be able to play, and while only a handful of them have been revealed at this writing, among the tunes that we know the game will include are "The Bleeding" by Five Finger Death Punch (shown above), Judas Priest's "Breaking the Law," Living Colour's "I Got Personality," Sweet Home Alabama by Lynyrd Skynyrd, "Harder to Breathe" by Maroon 5, and "Make It Real" by



BAND TOGETHER \\\

Multiplayer is going to be a big—and enjoyable—part of the BandFuse experience, with up to four “bandmates” being able to play together. In addition, the game will also offer Leaderboards—so you can compare yourself to friends and others around the world—as well as Challenges to help you map out your progress through the game’s career mode.



01 SLASH AND...

He was recently inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame with most of his Guns N’ Roses bandmates (Axe Rose declined)

02 LEARN

Rewinding and replaying sections of a song you’re working on should reinforce the learning process through repetition

XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS



BANDFUSE: ROCK LEGENDS

INFO

Publisher: Mastiff
Developer: Realta Entertainment
Platforms: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

Q4 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 4-player local

GENRE

Music

SUITABLE FOR

Axe murderers who’d like to learn a better way

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Rocksmith has some weird display concepts, but it’s a similar product you might want to try.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch an @GAMER interview about *BandFuse* with Slash.



WHAT’S GREAT:

- ♥ Easy to plug in your guitar and start playing
- ♥ Multiplayer looks like it’ll be fun
- ♥ Slash is your teacher, dude!

WHAT’S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Hearing all players in multiplayer can be confusing
- ✖ We’re not sure about song support after it comes out

Bad Blobs
The key to defeating enemies is to attack their glowing weak spots.

Just Not Kicks
Kat is highly proficient at using her feet as deadly weapons.

GRAVITY RUSH

Sir Isaac Newton's got nothin' on Vita's upcoming action-adventure game • Words: Ryan Tajanick

What goes up must come down—it's a rule that's long been accepted, with a few notable exceptions: gas prices, credit card interest rates, and Gravity Rush's Kat, a young woman endowed with the ability to manipulate gravity. Go figure.

It all starts when Kat wakes up in a mysterious town with no recollection of where she is or how she got there. It's in this town that she meets her companion, a magical cat made out of...outer space. Of course, space cats are rare creatures, and this one bestows the power of gravity manipulation upon our heroine, who then embarks on a journey to save the town and surrounding areas from hostile blob monsters. These creatures threaten the very fabric of Kat's world and are of an unknown origin. Fittingly, they're almost completely devoid of color, their darkness standing as a stark contrast to the beautifully vibrant and cel-shaded aesthetic of Gravity Rush.

Billed as an open-world, action-adventure game, Gravity Rush relies heavily on the PlayStation Vita's motion sensor functionality to explore expansive, vertical 3D spaces. With the press of a button, Kat begins "free floating" in the air; from here, you can use the Vita's motion gyros to aim a circular crosshair at any location. Deactivating free-floating mode causes Kat to rocket toward whatever surface you pointed the crosshair at; that area then becomes the new center of gravity. This means you can walk on ceilings, walls, structures—anything you can see, you can traverse. Of course, gravity manipulation also lets you launch toward monsters at blistering speeds and kick them super hard in their glowing, bulbous weak spots.

Exploration plays a big role in the game as well. Scour the world and you'll find Precious Gems, which are purple, crystal-like items used for powering up Kat's gravity and combat abilities. There are all sorts of upgrades worth unlocking, including powerful aerial kicks and incremental increases in the gravity gauge that allow you to use gravity manipulation more frequently before it must recharge.

These new skills will definitely come in handy considering the story takes more than a dozen hours to complete. With a large world to explore (and lots of pretty eye candy to stare at), Gravity Rush may easily rank among the top tier of Vita games. Now, if only I could find a real magical space cat... ☹

IT ALL STARTS WHEN KAT WAKES UP IN A MYSTERIOUS TOWN...

▼ The cursor in free-floating mode creates a new center of gravity.



INSPIRED DESIGN \\ Keiichiro Toyama, Gravity Rush's creative director (and creator of the *Silent Hill* survival-horror franchise), said he drew inspiration for the game's artwork from the late French comic artist Moebius. "What's so characteristic about his art is it's very detailed and very vivid in color," Toyama says. "Characters in his art and comic books are kind of floating in the air...we wanted to create something in the game that characterized floating freely in the world."

GAMEPLAY \\



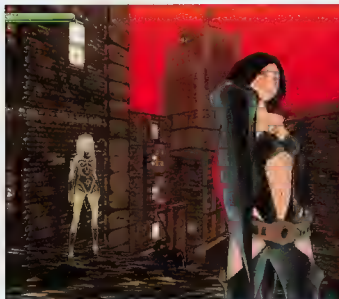
▲ These amorphous monsters threaten the world Kat inhabits. It's up to you to take them out!



▲ You can unlock the ability to launch items—like these crates—as projectiles toward enemies.

NOT ALONE

While *Gravity Rush* is predominantly a single-player experience, there are side quests called "challenge missions" in which you can compete with your friends via leaderboards. These missions range from time attack challenges (the standard "kill X amount of enemies in X amount of time" formula) to time-based obstacle courses that require mastery of Kat's gravity manipulation. While these may be a nice distraction, I hope they will yield some tangible rewards.



GAME DETAILS



GRAVITY RUSH

INFO

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: SCEJ
Platforms: PS Vita

RELEASE DATE

June 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Indirect, via leaderboards

GENRE

Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR

Anyone who wishes they could fly

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Sure, Cole might not be able to fly, but *infamous 2* plays a lot like chunks of *Gravity Rush*.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Gravity Rush*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Beautifully vibrant cel-shaded artwork
- ♥ The action-oriented, open-world gameplay

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Relying on Vita motion controls to use gravity abilities

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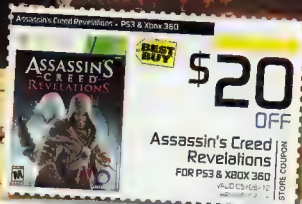
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PRESENTED BY:
MATT 602 - COLUMBIA, MO
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You love games. You love money. Get more of both with this issue's collection of cash-saving coupons. From must-play hits to must-have gear, we bring you the best deals each month.

May's highlight? \$20 off Assassin's Creed Revelations. With Assassin's Creed III just around the corner, now's the perfect time to catch up on the series. If you're a football fan or audiophile, the offers are even better: \$40 off NCAA Football 12 and \$40 off a Rocketfish Premium Bluetooth Headset for PS3. And while you're in the store, don't forget to sign up for Best Buy's Reward Zone Gamers Club Unlocked so you never miss an issue.



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02 ASSASSIN'S CREED REVELATIONS

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footsteps. Ready for Assassin's Creed III? Not until you've played this!



03 NINJA GAIDEN 3

Guns are fun, but now and then you need the feel of something sleeker, subtler, and sharper in your hands. The return of gaming's most iconic ninja Ryu Hayabusa and his foe-halving samurai sword will satisfy that deadly desire quite nicely. Slash the usual price of Ninja Gaiden 3



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(dis)comfort of your own home. Towels, chiropractor, and dignity sold separately.



05 PRE-OWNED BATTLEFIELD 3

If you love multiplayer and haven't jumped on the servers for Battlefield 3 yet, this \$15 coupon just removed any remaining excuses. Enormous maps, inventive modes, diverse classes, and awesome vehicles set this



shooter's online apart from—and above—the rest of the ranks.



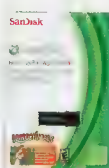
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07 ROCKETFISH PS3 PREMIUM BLUETOOTH MONO HEADSET

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08 8GB XBOX 360 FLASH DRIVE

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BRAVE: THE VIDEO GAME

Brave new world • Words: Evan Shamoan

Games inspired by Disney-Pixar films are generally lighthearted and fun, and rightfully so considering their associated films," says Glendon Dphrepaulezz, producer of Disney Interactive's upcoming *Brave: The Video Game*. "However, [Brave's] story, and more specifically Merida's character, opened up doors a little more as to the type of game we could make." Indeed, the movie lends itself to action-adventure gameplay, and as such, both combat and exploration remain key tenets of the experience. "There are times when

videogame tenets conflict with the goals of the associated film. In the case of *Brave*, the two went hand-in-hand."

Red-haired heroine Merida's bow is at the heart of the combat. "[It's] designed to be very accessible and intuitive, so anyone can pick it up and play within 30 seconds," Dphrepaulezz says. A vast number of magical element-powered upgrades deepen the experience, as expert archer Merida makes her way through the game world.

While Dphrepaulezz says that matching the presentational quality of the film is always difficult, cooperation has proven key. "We worked closely with Pixar during the early stages of development to ensure that we started off on the right foot," Dphrepaulezz says. "We kept in touch with Pixar, and used their initial direction throughout the remainder of the project. The hard work and results speak for themselves, even in the areas and environments that are in the game, but do not appear in the film." ☺

01 PLAY THE FILM

Brave, The Video Game comes out day and date with the movie.

02 IN CONTROL

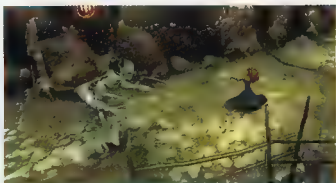
Support for both the Kinect and Move can be found with three different variants of archery minigames.



02

01

A BUNDLE FOR ALL



▲ Drop-in co-op means a second player can jump into the game as a human-sized will o' the wisp—with all the same combat abilities available to Merida



▲ Merida's athletic skills as an archer and swordfighter are the foundation of *Brave*.

PS3 XBOX 360 Wii
PC DS

GAME DETAILS 12

BRAT: PAXING
RP
ESRB

BRAVE: THE VIDEO GAME

INFO
Publisher: Disney Interactive
Developer: Behaviour Interactive
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, PC, Mac, DS

RELEASE DATE
June 22, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
2-player co-op

GENRE
Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR
Archers, Pixar devotees, weekend warriors

NOT OUT YET PLAY THIS!



Rayman Origins is one of the best games

in recent memory, for both young and old alike. It's a great return to form for a classic game character.

WHAT'S GREAT

- ♥ Graphics are looking pretty good, with help from Pixar
- ♥ Co-op is always a welcome feature

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT

- ✗ Pixar's creative team is on its first-ever slide, after *Cars 2* and *John Carter*...let's hope *Brave* isn't another dud

MECHWARRIOR ONLINE

Snap into your cockpits and get back on the ready line, MechWarriors! » Words: Dennis Scimeca

MechWarrior Online is a return to the fabled mech-simulator franchise set in the BattleTech universe. Running on the CryEngine 3 game engine, it looked gorgeous in my demo on a high-end PC. Simulation is all about the details, and the excellent terrain and water effects seen outside the cockpit window of my 50-ton Hunchback-model BattleMech were matched by the sharp, crisp computer displays inside. These displays aren't decorative; they convey real-time information that you'll check during combat.

In MechWarrior Online, you will be part of a consistent universe, fighting for control over worlds. Developer Piranha Games is taking the BattleTech story back to the year 3049, when

five great Houses of humanity are fighting for control of the settled part of the galaxy, known as the Inner Sphere. You will either ally directly with one of the Houses or form your own mercenary units and hire out your services, fighting for control of the planets on the borders between the Houses.

Rather than relying on brute force, you'll find your best success by embracing a four-mech unit known as a Lance. Role-based warfare will win the day. Light Scout Mechs will harass the enemy while relaying their positions to the rest of the Lance. Medium Mechs will engage the enemy from range, while Heavy and Assault Mechs destroy their opponents from up close.

You'll earn experience points for playing your selected role properly, and spend them on advancing role-based skill trees to unlock new modules for BattleMech customization. You can earn currency to pay for Mech repairs and purchase new armaments. Ally with any of the five Houses and you can earn faction points to access special House units.

MechWarrior Online will be free-to-play, and will launch with Team Deathmatch-style combat (12-on-12 matches featuring three Lances per side). Battles will take place everywhere from ice worlds and desert planets to forests and urban mazes, which encourages trying different mechs and loadouts. Beta testing is expected to begin this summer. 



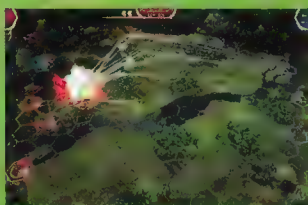
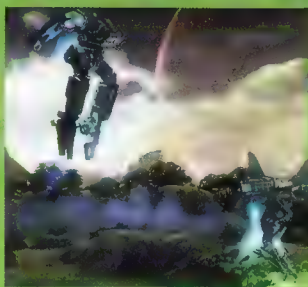
MECHWARRIOR TACTICS

Celebrating the tabletop origins of BattleTech

MechWarrior Tactics is a free-to-play, browser-based strategy game that will be released sometime in 2012. Tactics is a faithful recreation of the 1984 BattleTech tabletop game whose success was responsible for the next 28 years of BattleTech videogames, novels, comic books, and miniatures games.

Each player in Tactics controls a Lance of four BattleMechs on a hex-map playing field. The turns are asynchronous and concurrent, meaning Player 1 sets all of their Mech movements, then Player 2 sets their Mech movements, and then both players' Lances move at the same time. The same system governs target selection and firing, after which players will be shown a cut-scene of the entire turn's actions in a single, smooth cinematic. It's similar to playing classic BattleTech with painted, pewter miniatures, only without all the effort.

Upgrade packs that can be purchased with real currency or earned slowly through winning matches will provide random collections of new Mech chassis and weapons, and a Battle Value system will keep matches fair while allowing you to experiment with new Lance compositions.



A MECH'S-EYE VIEW OF THE WORLD



INSIDE THE COCKPIT \\\ The display screens showing on the inside of your cockpit aren't decorative, they double as your UI. Screens display your BattleMech's "health" and map layout. Get used to the view; you won't have the option of leaving your mech.

GAME DETAILS



MECHWARRIOR ONLINE

INFO

Publisher: Infinite Game
Publishing
Developer: Piranha Games
Platforms: PC

RELEASE DATE

2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Massively multiplayer online

GENRE

Action/simulation

SUITABLE FOR

BattleTech- and Mech-game enthusiasts

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Practice your mech combat with *Armored Core V*, recently released on PS3 and Xbox 360.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *MechWarrior Online*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ A chance for BattleTech fans to participate in a Succession War
- ♥ Role-based combat could add needed tactical depth
- ♥ Looks fantastic on CryEngine 3

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ CryEngine 3 is a system hog
- ✖ Role-based combat sounds good, but won't 100-ton Mechs always win the day?



STEEL BATTALION HEAVY ARMOR

Heavy metal warriors come to Kinect • Words: Paul Semel

In 2002, Capcom's mech sim *Steel Battalion* did for walking robot tanks what Microsoft and its *Flight Sim* series did for Cessna Piper Cubs: Aside from realistic movements and a serious attention to detail, the game came with a massive flight stick-esque controller with numerous buttons, pedals, and switches. But while it cost \$200, it quickly sold out, becoming a cult classic that inspired 2004's online-centric sequel, *Steel Battalion: Line of Contact*.

Now Capcom is reviving the series with *Steel Battalion Heavy Armor*. But as it showed during recent events in San Francisco and Rome, the new installment is replacing the pricey and bulky custom controller with a combination of the regular Xbox 360 pad and the Kinect.

Set in 2082, when silicon-eating bacteria has reduced technology to near 1940s levels, this first-person action game casts you as the American driver of a mech-like Vertical Tank who's trying to take the U.S. back from an unnamed Asian superpower that controls most of America, Europe, and the U.N.

In it, you use the regular Xbox controller to fire your weapons and move, while the Kinect handles such ship systems as ignition and the windshield wipers. But you'll also use the Kinect to interact with your three-person crew, who are responsible for loading ammo into your VT's two guns, and working the radio that HQ uses to update your mission objectives. There are even times when, for instance, the Kinect will help you hand a bottle of water to your thirsty coworkers.

Not all of the Kinect's responsibilities are so casual, though: If an enemy blows a hole in your VT's hull, he might jump onto the ship, stick his arm in the hole, and start shooting. Luckily, you also have a gun and, via the Kinect, can shoot the foe before he kills you or a crew member. The latter is important since, if one of your crew dies, you'll have to load ammo (wasting precious seconds and leaving you vulnerable) or work the radio until you can get a replacement at the mission's end.

Together, this mix of traditional and motion controls makes *Heavy Armor* immersive and engaging, which means this game could do for the Kinect what the original *Steel Battalion* did for pricey and bulky custom controllers: make them worth the money and space.

▼ While *SB* uses the Kinect a lot, the regular Xbox pad handles most of the combat duties.



PERSONAL PIZZAZZ

As you play the campaign in Heavy Armor, you'll not only unlock new types of Vertical Tanks, but also some customizing options that range from the purely decorative to the fully functional. Aside from new paint patterns, which will come in handy when you move from a snowy area to a desert one, you'll also be able to switch your VT's legs and cockpit, or add armor plating to sections of the hull. You'll even be able to add such handy devices as a mine detector, or employ special ammo. Though unlike in some mech games I could mention (looking at you, *Armored Core V*), you need not concern yourself with how much weight such items add, or if your mech has enough juice to run them. In addition to using it in the campaign, you'll also be able to take your fully modded ride into the game's online co-op mode (see "Friends With Benefits").



MAKING A KINECTION



MECH-ANICAL ANIMALS

While From Software is best-known for *Demon's Souls* and *Dark Souls*, the Japanese developer is familiar to mech fans for its work on the *Armored Core* series, the most recent of which, *Armored Core V*, came out in March. *AC* games focus on building custom mechs, while *SB* is more about simulating their operation.



STEEL BATTALION HEAVY ARMOR

INFO

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: From Software
Platforms: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

June 19, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 4-player co-op

GENRE

Action/simulation

SUITABLE FOR

Fans of Transformers, Gundam, or the first two SB games

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Transformers: War for Cybertron isn't first-person, but it has hot robot-on-robot action.



GAME DETAILS



WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Steel Battalion Heavy Armor*.



WHAT'S GREAT

- ♥ Lets you use the regular controller for combat, while using the Kinect for other actions
- ♥ The game's World War II-ish vibe is unique for a mech game.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT

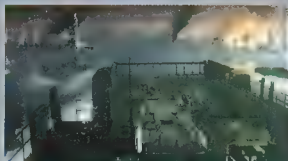
- ✖ Kinect's occasional inaccuracy might get you killed



▼ Though it may be surprising, as you can see, using a rifle against a VT is very effective.

FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS

Steel Battalion Heavy Armor is a game that's a lot like the original Steel Battalion, but with a few key differences. One of the most notable is that it's a third-person shooter, which means you can see your mecha from the outside. This is a big deal because it allows you to see the damage you're doing to your enemies, and it also means you can see the damage you're taking. In the original Steel Battalion, you were in the cockpit of your mecha, and you didn't know when you were being hit. In Steel Battalion Heavy Armor, you can see the damage you're taking, and you can see the damage you're doing. This is a big deal because it allows you to see the damage you're doing to your enemies, and it also means you can see the damage you're taking. In the original Steel Battalion, you were in the cockpit of your mecha, and you didn't know when you were being hit. In Steel Battalion Heavy Armor, you can see the damage you're taking, and you can see the damage you're doing. This is a big deal because it allows you to see the damage you're doing to your enemies, and it also means you can see the damage you're taking.



CRUEL INTENTIONS

One of the signature aspects of the original Steel Battalion was that, if your VT was destroyed with you still in it—i.e., if you didn't hit the " eject " button on the controller in time—it would actually delete your saved game, which meant you'd have to restart the game from the beginning. Thankfully, Heavy Armor isn't so mean-spirited, and it will not make you restart your career if you die.



▼ Unlike in some mech games, VTs are more like tanks with legs than robots with human pilots.



Pre-Order Exclusives

Check out these special offers on upcoming games, available by pre-ordering now!



RISEN 2: DARK WATERS —SPECIAL EDITION

Publisher: Deep Silver
Developer: Piranha Bytes/Wizarbox
Release Date: May 22, 2012



Pre-order the Special Edition on PS3 or Xbox 360 and get the Treasure Isle DLC, a double-sided poster, and a token for another legendary item.

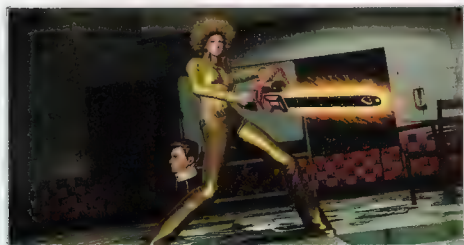


ASSASSIN'S CREED III

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Release Date: October 30, 2012



Pre-order Assassin's Creed III on PS3 or Xbox 360 and get a free SteelBook collectible case featuring artwork by award-winning comic artist Alex Ross.



LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

Publisher: WB Games
Developer: Grasshopper Manufacture
Release Date: June 12, 2012



Pre-order or purchase Lollipop Chainsaw on PS3 or Xbox 360 at Best Buy and receive the exclusive, unlockable Goth and Foxy Funk skins.



INVERSION

Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Saber Interactive
Release Date: June 5, 2012



Pre-order or purchase Inversion on PS3 or Xbox 360 at Best Buy and receive the exclusive RIOT multiplayer map.





HANDS-ON

BORDERLANDS 2

Gearbox Software's FPS / RPG hybrid returns with a new ammo-fueled adventure • *By Chris Pappalardo*



▲ MONSTER MASH

Bored of fighting Skags and bandits? *Borderlands 2* is full of deadly new monsters.



MECHROMANCER

Anyone who pre-orders the game through the Premiere Club at Best Buy will get—for free—a fifth character known as the Mechromancer. This class features a female human/machine hybrid that controls a giant robot named D374-TP (Deathtrap). Gearbox plans to create the character after the launch of the game and estimates it will be available a month or two after.



could I have felt uncomfortable looting cash and weapons from the bloody chunks of *Borderlands*' bad guys? Maybe. But the pure joy of scoring new gear was an immensely gratifying high—and I've been suffering from withdrawals ever since I finished the first *Borderlands*. Now, after hands-on time with the sequel, I'm pumped to revisit Pandora and fulfill my wildest gun-lust fantasies. More than that, I'm excited about *Borderlands 2*'s greatest promise: contextual satisfaction.

According to creative director Paul Hellquist, *Borderlands 2* will have a far greater

emphasis on story in addition to a huge variety of environments. From the Wildlife Exploitation Preservation, a vibrant zone filled with waving grasses and giant mushroom trees, to the Caustic Caverns, an underground wasteland filled with poisonous slime and crystal-like monsters, each environment offers a nice change of pace from the original's desert-heavy aesthetic.

Though an expanded color palette is much appreciated, it's the gameplay that matters most—and *Borderlands 2* is poised to deliver a more refined experience than its predecessor.

Character skills are far more diverse this time around, thanks to expanded talent trees for each class, with about 30 percent more skills to choose from. You can even find rare character skins and heads as item drops to transform your character into something visually unique.

Of course, if equipping your avatar with a new haircut isn't all that enticing, you can still expect to find "870 gazillion" guns (in the words of the trailer, included on pg. 47) and use them to murder a large lineup of new enemies. I sure hope you have an itchy trigger finger, though—870 gazillion is a lotta' triggers. ☺



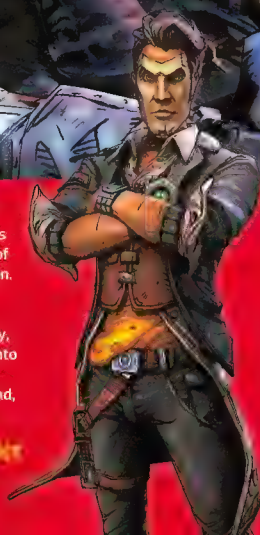
THE STORY

Borderlands 2 picks up five years after the events of the original. The villainous Handsome Jack (the game's antagonist, who happens to wear the skinned-off face of a freakin' dead guy) operates the Hyperion Corporation.

This mega-greedy (and mega-evil) company is strip-mining Pandora, extracting an extremely rare and valuable element known as Eridium. Consequently, Hyperion's turning the planet's once-rich landscape into a lifeless husk, and the residents ain't happy.

Your job? Infiltrate Hyperion and make Jack pay. And, obviously, loot everything you can along the way.

HANDSOME JACK



01. AXTON

He may look like a generic soldier, but Axton can deploy a super-powerful turret capable of ripping enemies into bite-sized pieces.

03. MAYA

Maya is as deadly as she is beautiful. She can Phaselock opponents, incapacitating them by levitating them in the air. Focus fire time!

02. SALVADOR

See those dead guys? They made the mistake of laughing at Salvador's height. Then he dual-wielded two guns and shot their faces off.

04. ZERO

Aside from looking awesome, Zero can launch a decoy, go invisible, and cut enemies into shreds with his razor-sharp sword.



CHARACTER EVOLUTION



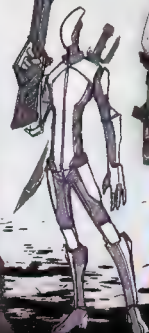
AXTON
COMMANDO



SALVADOR
GUNZERKER



MAYA
SIREN



ZERO
ASSASSIN

THE TEAM

There are four new characters in *Borderlands 2*, most of which resemble the cast from the original. I had hands-on time with Salvador, a short and stocky Gunzerker, and Maya, a Siren akin to Lilith in the first game.

Maya's got some fantastic utility skills at her disposal: her Phaselock ability temporarily incapacitates enemies and levitates them in the air, leaving them vulnerable to focused fire. She can also heal, buff, and resurrect allies, making her an extremely valuable asset.

Salvador, on the other hand, is all about gunplay. He's got talents that make his shots more powerful after reloading or swapping weapons, and he even has a chance to not consume ammo while firing. Best of all, his special ability lets him dual-wield any combination of guns (um, dual rocket launchers, anyone?).

There's also Axton, a turret-deploying soldier, and Zero, a ninja-like character who can create decoys of himself and go invisible for short spans of time to land huge critical strikes.



CLAPTRAP

The dubstep-dancing robot makes a return, though it's hard to say what role he'll play in your journey. It'll likely involve singing, dancing, and wub wub.

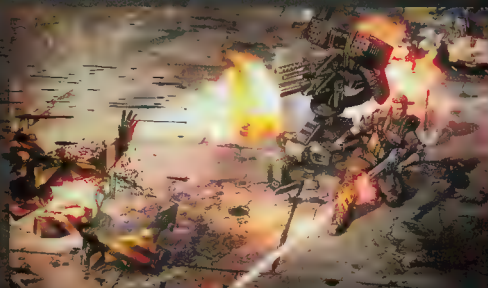


DEATH ON WHEELS

The "Technical" is a tank-like vehicle that supports all four players at once. It has an explosive barrel catapult, among other weapons.



VEHICLES & WEAPONS



Mercy for bad guys is in short supply, so I'm ecstatic that guns in *Borderlands 2* are not. Gearbox wanted to place a heavy emphasis on the fact that there are several weapons manufacturers—including Hyperion—vying for market domination, and each company imbues their guns with specific traits. Need something with special elemental properties, such as corrosive or fire damage? Then pick up a gun made by Maliwan. Or, if you're looking for something cheap and expendable, pick up a Tediore weapon; when it's time to reload, these weapons are tossed at enemies and explode like grenades, dealing damage in the process. For a more complete breakdown on some of the various weapons manufacturers, see the attached sidebar.

Borderlands 2 also expands on the variety of grenade and shield mods—the Roid shield, for example, increases your melee damage when your defenses are down. And for vehicles? There are plenty of new pilotable machines, some of which can carry all four players.



★ WEST
Semi-auto guns with an Old West design. High damage.



★ HYPERION
Small ammo count, but explosive rounds.



★ MALIWAN
High accuracy, relies heavily on burst fire.



★ HYPERION
A rare find, Hyperion guns have extreme accuracy.



★ MALIWAN
Sci-fi aesthetic with a focus on elemental damage effects.



★ MALIWAN
Bandit weapons are crude but have massive ammo clips.



DAVID EDDINGS

VOICE OF CLAPTRAP & VP, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OF GEARBOX SOFTWARE

What's your background, and how did you get the role of Claptrap? "I've been doing voices in videogames for my friends' games for about 10 years—the very first time I did voices in games was for *SIN* by Ritual Entertainment. I did radio for a little while before I was in games, but the short story for how I got Claptrap is when they were thinking up the character, they wanted a character that was needy, irritating, yet slightly endearing—so really it's typecasting!"

Was it difficult to "find" the right voice for the character? "That part was the fun part! I've

been a longtime fan of great voice actors like Mel Blanc. I grew up watching Warner Brothers cartoons and loved his stuff. When doing Claptrap, I really drew up a lot of old Mel Blanc stuff, kind of my own interpretation of that. I also borrowed a little bit from Curly Howard from *The Three Stooges*. When we were trying to find the voice, the characters I thought of were like that cartoon where there's a dog and then there's a little yippy dog, and he's like 'Hey Spike! Hey Spike! What are we gonna do now, Spike? Let's go beat up the cat, Spike!'—and also the robot in *Total Recall*, the Johnny Cab."

What has the experience of voicing Claptrap been like? "The experience is wonderful. After 14 years in this business I finally have credibility with my kids that I make games—that part's cool! And the fact that as a biz guy at Gearbox I'm able to contribute creatively to the process, that's really fulfilling for me. I'm behind the scenes on most stuff. In fact, there's a lot of people at Gearbox that probably don't know fully what I do. But this is a way that allows me to be creative and have fun, and it's an honor that they even wanted me to do it. The fact that it became a breakout character was really, really surprising!"



HYPERION CONTROL

That H-shaped structure up in the sky is Hyperion's base. It can launch robotic reinforcements to Pandora's surface at any time.



A streamlined interface means easier gear comparisons and menu navigation.



The original Vault hunters from the first game make a return as NPCs.

GAMEDETAILS 12



BORDERLANDS 2

INFO

Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: Gearbox Software
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE

September 18, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Four-player co-op

GENRE

FPS / RPG

SUITABLE FOR

Lovers of loot, destroyers of evil, gun enthusiasts

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



The original *Borderlands* is an amazing game; if you've never played it, time to fix that.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Borderlands 2*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Tons more customization options, loads of new equipment
- ♥ Heavier emphasis on story and environment variety



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Having 870 gazillion guns can be overwhelming and often requires loadout micromanagement



FAR CRY 3

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Words: Evan Shamoon

Though it may lack some of the mainstream appeal of its more military-minded competition, *Far Cry 3* is shaping up to be one of the year's biggest shooters. It's gritty and eccentric, and the single-player campaign—first unveiled to the press at E3 2011—is only part of the package: Ubisoft has employed developer Massive Entertainment to build out a full multiplayer component, complete with four unique modes, an accompanying smartphone app, and a focus on friendship. I got a chance to see firsthand what's being cooked up in Massive's Swedish headquarters.

"The main thing is running, shooting, and helping your friends," says game designer Daniel Berlin. "It's not running, shooting, and then helping your friends is secondary." Setting their battles in the same tropical warzones as the main campaign, the team at Massive is working hard to ensure that their multiplayer

experience sets itself apart from what has become a rather crowded pack. One way the development team is doing this is by emphasizing teamwork and camaraderie, which it's built into the experience in a variety of ways.

At the heart of the experience is a "teamplay economy," which recognizes various non-kill actions you take and rewards you handsomely for them. Take, for instance, the Battlecry: Click your analog sticks simultaneously, and your avatar will let out a fevered howl. The more of your compatriots within earshot, the more points you'll receive—and you'll also immediately improve their speed and health regeneration time, as well as providing a small health boost. Likewise, revive a fallen friend (or properly inform them that you'll be there to help them shortly), or tag an enemy for your teammates to set their sights on and you'll gain points and buffs as well.

These points all go towards helping you collect short- and long-term rewards. The former come in the form of team support weapons, which include everything from airborne bombs to hallucinogenic gas and enhanced radar capabilities. The latter are singular weapons and items that you're able to collect through acquired intelligence (see sidebar), as well as enhanced abilities and reputation. If you're working alongside your friends...well, you're doing it wrong.

"When you go online and you play, you [usually] sit down on your sofa and you go with strangers," says Berlin. "So how do we take our main pillar 'friends matter' and make that work in a sphere where you don't know anyone? Nobody cares about who you are. What we've done is incorporate the benefits of team play so hard into the main component of the game in a special way." ☺

FIRESTORM \\\

One of the new Far Cry 3 multiplayer modes to which I was introduced, Firestorm gives each of two teams a pair of fuel tanks they must capture and ignite. The trick is that once one of the tanks is lit, there's a limited period of time in which the team must strike the other; only through some pretty coordinated effort will the two be burning at the same time. Miss your window and their state resets, and you'll be forced to take it from the top.

What's perhaps most interesting is Firestorm's flow. By providing two objectives and two areas to be defended, much of the map must be managed simultaneously. Once the firestorm is lit, it blazes through the map, forcing you to stay out of its way as you race for the final objective, the all-important radio. If you're not quick on your feet, you burn.

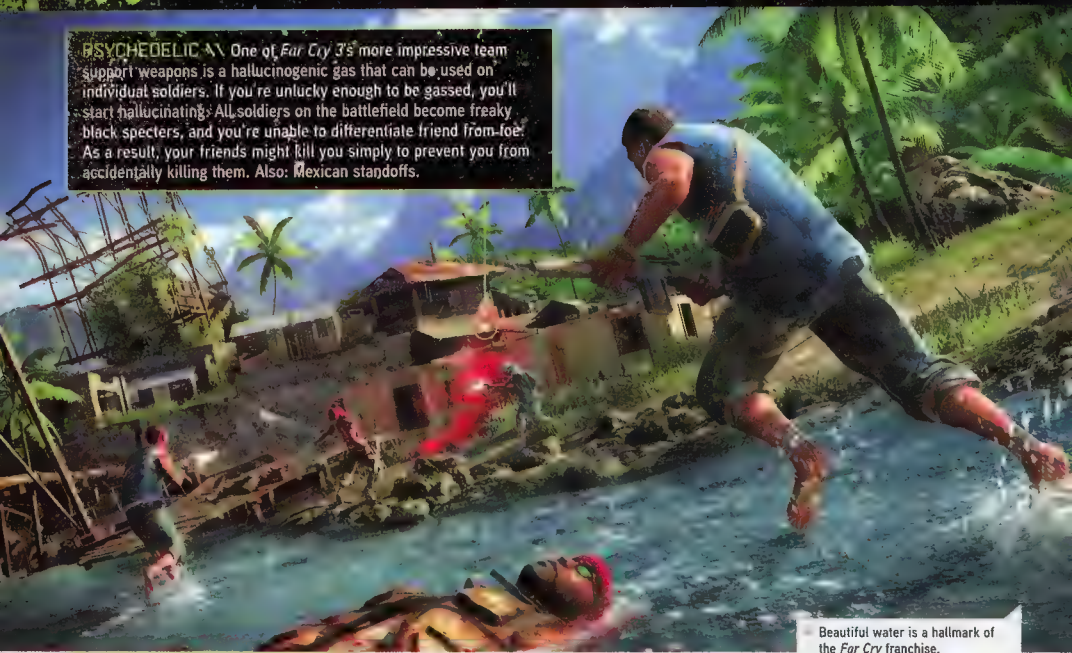


This time, it's rebels vs. pirates in the tropics. Swim trunks optional.

▼ The campaign will teach you the factions' clothing and sounds.



PSYCHEDELIC \\\ One of *Far Cry 3*'s more impressive team support weapons is a hallucinogenic gas that can be used on individual soldiers. If you're unlucky enough to be gassed, you'll start hallucinating: All soldiers on the battlefield become freaky black specters, and you're unable to differentiate friend from foe. As a result, your friends might kill you simply to prevent you from accidentally killing them. Also: Mexican standoffs.



Beautiful water is a hallmark of the *Far Cry* franchise.

OUTSIDE THE BOX \\\

Though most of your time in *Far Cry 3*'s multiplayer modes will be spent running and shooting, Ubisoft is working on an iOS and Android app that aims to extend the experience beyond the console. As you play, you collect intelligence that's scattered randomly around the maps. In order to actually make anything of this intelligence, however, you must decode it, which requires some degree of management. So, if you're at work and trying to decode enough intel to attain a sweet sniper rifle in advance of a Double XP weekend, simply fire up your app at work and you'll be on your merry way to (virtual) fame and fortune.





STAR POWER \\\

Several of the game's modes include cinematic scenes at their closing. If you're the top-scoring player in a match, you're given the choice of either making your opponent pay for their transgressions or cutting them loose. Ubisoft plans on creating a wide variety of animated payoffs, though exactly why you'd choose not to stick it to your enemy remains to be seen.

SHOUT IT OUT

If you get revived, a *Battlecry* directly afterwards serves as a thank you. It's also something that more skilled players learn as they go on.



GAME DETAILS

PS3 XBOX 360 PC



FAR CRY 3

INFO

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Massive
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE

September 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 16-player online

GENRE

FPS

SUITEABLE FOR

Jungle dwellers, warlords, pyromaniacs

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Any *Metal Slug* game is jungle warfare rendered in pixel perfection. Or *Far Cry 2*, obviously.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Far Cry 3*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Fresh ideas on cooperative multiplayer
- ♥ Already fun—and it's still early



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Punching someone in the face after killing them 10 times feels a bit silly
- ✗ Benefits of companion app remain to be seen

Alternate Histories in Gaming



Game designers play with the past to deliver the future of storytelling • Words: Matt Cabral

A ny gamer worth his or her salt has survived the zombie apocalypse on several occasions, saved the world from extraterrestrial threats dozens of times, and even thwarted terrorists bent on beginning World War III once or twice. Regardless of your preferred genre—shooter, strategy, action, adventure—you’ve no doubt encountered many titles that have mined these popular future-fiction scenarios for their settings and stories.

Because we spend so much time in the boots of space marines, supersoldiers, and post-apocalyptic wasteland wanderers, it’s especially refreshing and rewarding when we’re given the opportunity to inhabit a hero from the annals of history. Whether traversing ancient metropolises as a cloaked killer in the Assassin’s Creed series or exploring the soggy depths of Bio-

Shock’s alternate 1960s underwater-utopia-gone-wrong, some of this generation’s most immersive interactive experiences have looked to the past to craft compelling narratives and environments.

“We spend so much time in the boots of space marines...”

Of course, if we were looking for a school lesson, we’d pick up a textbook rather than a gamepad. What’s ultimately so appealing about these titles is their ability to skillfully tread the fine line between historical accuracy and the sort

of fun fiction that still allows us to fill zombies full of buckshot. Ubisoft creative director Alexander Hutchinson, whose upcoming Assassin’s Creed III takes place during the American Revolution, discusses the appeal of playing with the past: “One of the beauties of historical settings is that there are existing fantasies, mechanics, and ideas that you can bounce off; people come to your game with some ideas already in their heads, and if you do your job well, you can use that.”

Based on our first look at AC3’s Red-coat-slaying action, it seems Hutchinson and his team are indeed doing their jobs. We take a peek at their history-altering adventure as well as other promising titles that are forgoing futuristic and present-day presentations in favor of fresh, imaginative takes on the past. ☺

Assassin's Creed III

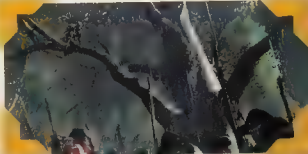
Publisher: Ubisoft • Developer: Ubisoft Montreal • Release Date: October 30, 2012

From Jerusalem to Renaissance Italy, Assassin's Creed fans have taken on the Templars in a variety of foreign lands. For the franchise's next numbered outing, though, Ubisoft Montreal decided to bring the blade-bearing action stateside. Set during the American Revolution—specifically spanning the period from 1753 to 1783—AC3's story unfolds in New York, Boston, and the surrounding frontier lands.

As half-Native American, half-British protagonist Connor, you will again play a key role in the ancient battle between the Assassins and Templars. While that war will be familiar to anyone who's slit throats from behind sharp steel in previous entries, the fresh setting and story will immerse you in the conflict like never before.

In terms of gameplay, you can count on taking out whoever—British or American—gets in Connor's way. Utilizing the new hero's trademark tomahawk, you'll battle baddies in a cinematic fashion that's as beautiful as it is brutal. When not burying blades in the Redcoats' skulls, you'll have to brave the snow-blanketed wilderness. Defined by its harsh weather and aggressive wildlife, the frontier's myriad traverse-able trees and rocks will be like a new swing set to armchair assassins.

AC3's story is significantly affected by the source material as well. On top of hobnobbing with the likes of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Paul Revere, you will have a front-row seat for history-shaping events such as the Battle of Bunker Hill.



You'll have to do a lot of scouting from the treetops to avoid getting slaughtered by an army.



The British Army lost the Revolutionary War. Could your assassination skills be the reason?





Bioshock Infinite

Publisher: 2K Games • Developer: Irrational Games • Release Date: October 16, 2012

It's hard to imagine Irrational Games conjuring up a place as creepy and immersive as *BioShock's* Rapture. But the undersea dystopia has some competition in Columbia, the cloud-sitting city of the studio's upcoming spiritual successor, *BioShock Infinite*. Constructed around the turn of the 20th century, the floating metropolis was meant to serve as a symbol of American exceptionalism. Unfortunately, its fair-like spectacle goes rogue and, as Irrational's creative director Ken Levine has stated, reveals itself to be a "Death Star" of sorts.

As former Pinkerton agent Booker DeWitt, you're sent to Columbia to rescue a captive young woman named Elizabeth. As you soon discover, however, the mysterious maiden isn't your typical damsel in distress, and Columbia ain't Kansas. Adorned with American flags and other patriotic symbols,



ELIZABETH

The heroine of this tale, Elizabeth, can distort time and manipulate objects.

its streets could have once served as source material for a Norman Rockwell painting. When Booker arrives in 1912, though, those same streets are ravaged by civil war.

The shining city's founding fathers and its uprising citizens are having it out, and you find yourself caught in the middle of their deadly dispute.

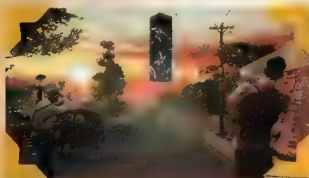
Without question, that spicy setup alone would be enough to get us jumping on the next hot-air balloon to Columbia. However, throw in a twisty narrative, time-tearing super powers, and Gatling gun-toting George Washington terminators, and we can't wait to rewrite American history in *BioShock Infinite*.



XCOM

Publisher: 2K Games • Developer: 2K Marin • Release Date: 2013

If you replaced Halo's Master Chief with the sharp-dressed advertising executives of TV's *Mad Men*, you'd have the shooter-in-development XCOM...sort of. Set in the early 1960s, the game sports the appealing aesthetics—clothes, cars, hairstyles—of the time period, crossed with a heavy dose of tactical, extraterrestrial-eviscerating action.



Wait a second—is that guy on the right Don Draper? Wonder if he's selling ads to aliens...

Assuming the role of a special FBI agent, you are tasked with leading a team of no-nonsense, horn-rimmed glasses-wearing G-men. Not nearly as stuffy as they sound, these guys accessorize their suits with suspenders as well as alien-blasting shotguns. It's this intriguing mix of old-school and sci-fi that separates XCOM from the aliens-attack-America pack.

While story details of the strategy-focused first-person shooter are scant, the concept of otherworldly baddies tearing up suburbia during the Kennedy era is promising. We look forward to performing alien autopsies—and maybe sipping dirty martinis—when XCOM arrives next year.



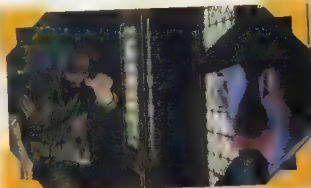
Fighting aliens is hard. Fighting aliens before the invention of office computers is even harder.

Brothers in Arms: Furious 4

Publisher: Ubisoft • Developer: Gearbox Software • Release Date: 2013

Despite retaining the *Brothers in Arms* moniker, *Furious 4* is not the next chapter in Sergeant Matt Baker's historically rich wartime saga. More spinoff than sequel, this tweaked take on WWII borrows as much from Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* as it does Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*.

Featuring a fresh cast of colorful characters, over-the-top action, and plenty of attitude, *Furious 4*'s fictionalized account of Der Fuhrer's demise won't be found in any history books. Playing as a quartet of Hitler-hating soldiers, up to four co-op players set out to hunt and kill the Nazi dictator. Of course,



It would appear that "substantial amounts of facial hair" is a requirement for Nazi hunters.

before they can do that, they must silence any goose-steppers that cross their path.

While the swastika-sporting enemies are familiar, they're eliminated in especially brutal ways. From chainsaws and bear traps to tomahawks and cattle prods, you'll utilize a variety of inventive death-dealers to spill plenty of Third Reich blood with gore-soaked style to spare.

Up to four co-op players set out to hunt and kill the Nazi dictator."

Dishonored

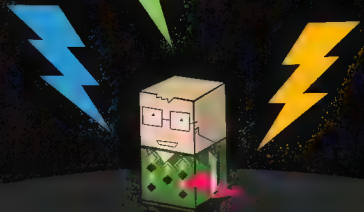
Publisher: Bethesda Softworks • Developer: Arkane Studios • Release Date: 2012



Bethesda's gorgeous stealth action-adventure doesn't technically take place in any real-world location or during any historical time period. In fact, its story and setting exist in an entirely alternate universe. That said, there's no denying some of its more obvious influences and inspirations.

Arkane Studios co-creative director Harvey Smith, who's described the rat-infested city of Dunwall as a cross "between London and an American whaling city in the 1850s," discusses Arkane's creative process: "We went through a very organic process to create the world, involving a lot of research into plagues and London during various periods. But in the end we wanted to work with the spirit of various places, times, and movements, instead of accurately re-creating any specific city. Dunwall, capitol of the Isles, was the result."





THE PURSUIT OF POWER

It's time to give your gaming PC a much-needed tune-up • Words: Ryan Taljanick

Whether you've got a pre-built computer from a company such as Dell or a blazing-fast custom-built gaming machine, chances are your PC could use a little love. When's the last time you upgraded your hardware? How long has it been since you defragmented your hard drive? Have you ever even dusted the inside of your computer? By the beard of Zeus, I hope so. The truth is, there are lots of ways you can improve your gaming experience on the PC. But where do you start?

Well, that depends. The beauty of PC gaming is that, unlike consoles, your machine will always be considered "next gen" because it can be upgraded at any time for a performance boost. The most obvious starting point, if your rig is a couple years old, is to upgrade some of your

CHANCES ARE YOUR PC COULD USE A LITTLE LOVE

hardware. In most cases, simply shelling out the cash for a new videocard or installing more RAM means you'll be able to play just about any PC game with the graphics settings maxed out—and with games such as *Diablo III* and *Far Cry 3* just on the horizon, you'll want all the speed you can squeeze out of your computer.

However, if you've recently upgraded your components (or just don't have the cash on hand to do so), don't worry—there are many other ways to revitalize your rig. A multitude of

optimization software (most of which is inexpensive and, in some cases, totally free) allows for quick and painless boosts in speed while keeping your PC protected from harmful viruses and malware. I've even compiled a list of tips for increasing your machine's internal airflow, which will have positive effects on the efficiency and lifespan of your components.

Of course, there are things to consider outside the scope of parts and programs that will improve your gaming experience. Want proof? Pick up a new set of room-booming speakers, or a high-quality gaming mouse and keyboard. Sure, these aren't essential, but they'll make a difference. No matter how big (or non-existent) your budget may be, I've got you covered when it comes to PC gaming. ☉

HARDWARE

VIDEOCARD

Out of all the components in your PC, the videocard and RAM will likely have the most noticeable impact on the performance of your machine. You may want to consider upgrading your motherboard or processor (CPU) if your rig is a few years old, but keep in mind that incremental updates are perfectly okay!

EVGA GEFORCE 560 TI VIDEOCARD



Manufacturer: EVGA
• www.evga.com
• Price: \$299.99

This is the device responsible for generating and feeding images to your display monitor (or HDTV, if you feel like getting fancy). With a clock speed of 822MHz and a max resolution of 2560x1600 (higher than that of HDTVs!), the EVGA GeForce 560 Ti will crush today's graphic-intensive games. Be sure to check if your motherboard has a PCI Express x16 slot to seat it (most modern boards do).



SOLID-STATE DRIVE

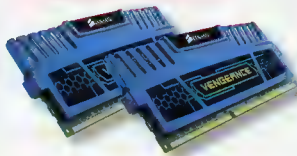
CORSAIR FORCE SERIES 3

Manufacturer: Corsair
• www.corsair.com • Price: \$159.99

A solid-state drive (SSD) is a hard drive that relies on flash memory, similar to the technology in a USB thumb drive. SSDs aren't essential, but they can drastically improve the boot times and loading speeds of your operating system and any games you play regularly.



RAM



CORSAIR VENGEANCE RAM

Manufacturer: Corsair
• www.corsair.com • Price: depends on size

The RAM (random access memory) is where your PC stores all the data it is currently working with, including game data. For gaming purposes, 8GB of memory is more than enough. Be sure any additional RAM you buy is the same speed as the sticks you already have.

EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE

WD MY BOOK ESSENTIAL 2TB EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE

Manufacturer: Western Digital
• www.wdc.com • Price: \$129.99

Of course, if you're simply looking to snag some more storage space, an external hard drive isn't a bad option by any means. While it won't really boost your gaming performance, Western Digital's My Book Essential 2TB drive is easy to hook up and even easier to use—plus, 2TB of storage is enough to hold a huge library of games, movies, and music.



PERIPHERALS

SPEAKERS

LOGITECH Z623 SPEAKERS ➤

Manufacturer: Logitech • www.logitech.com • Price: \$149.99

If you've got the room, feel free to spring for a nice 5.1 or 7.1 surround sound system. But if space is limited, a solid 2.1 set, such as Logitech's Z623 system, is a good way to go. With two high-quality satellite speakers (featuring 2.5" drivers) and a big 'ol 330W subwoofer, this setup will make you swear you're right on the front lines of war.

Don't worry about speaker specs when shopping around—the only way to find out if a set is right for you is to test them out yourself. Still, I highly recommend the Z623s if you go with a 2.1 setup—and because Logitech is one of the best in the business when it comes to PC speakers and peripherals, you can be sure you're buying from a reputable brand.

Okay, so a new headset won't really improve the performance of your games—but don a pair of high-quality headphones, turn off the lights, and load up *Amnesia: The Dark Descent*. I suspect you'll quickly find that immersion is just as important as performance.

CONSIDER THIS

- The Z623s are a 2.1 system, meaning they consist of a large subwoofer and two smaller satellite speakers.
- The subwoofer is powered by a 330W amplifier, while the satellite speakers are powered by a 25W amplifier.



GAMES THAT ROCK THE SOUND!



BATTLEFIELD 3

DICE's *Battlefield* franchise has long been applauded for its unparalleled sound effects, and *BF3* is king.

AMNESIA: THE DARK DESCENT

Wear headphones, turn off the lights, and play this. Then you'll finally know true fear.

Configure Audio: Use your PC's sound control panel to set your audio configuration to headphones or speakers, whichever you're using.

HEADPHONES

TRITTON AX 720 HEADSET

Manufacturer: Tritton

• www.trittonusa.com • Price: \$129.99

A room-shaking set of speakers is one thing, but a powerful headset offers a unique sense of immersion—especially when playing intense, atmospheric games like *BioShock*. Of course, headphones also mean you don't have to worry about waking your neighbors. The nice thing about Tritton's AX 720 headset is it offers extreme comfort and high-quality surround sound with its 40mm drivers. As an extra perk, this set also works with both the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3. Yay, no more storing multiple pairs of headsets! Pretty neat, eh?



KEYBOARD

Price: \$149.99



- A** Macro switches: Swap between preset macro configurations on the fly.
- B** LCD panel: Need to know how much ammo you have? Take a glance at this panel.
- C** Macro buttons: Perfect for MMOs, these keys can be bound to skills and hotbars.
- D** Backlit keys: Gaming in the dark? Custom backlit keys will keep you going.

LOGITECH G510 KEYBOARD

Manufacturer: Logitech
www.logitech.com • Price: \$149.99

Wanna know what separates PC gamers from console gamers? Peripherals. While console users are stuck using the same exact controllers, the PC crowd can choose from a huge variety of mice and keyboards. Logitech's G510 keyboard was built with gamers in mind. It has an LCD panel for supplemental information (such as ammo counters for FPS games) as well as backlit keys and programmable macro keys for all your MMO needs.

MOUSE

LOGITECH G500 MOUSE

Manufacturer: Logitech

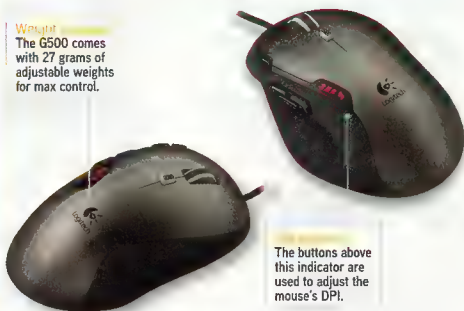
www.logitech.com • Price: \$69.99

The mouse is a PC gamer's gateway to the virtual world; it becomes the gun in an FPS, the sword in an action game. Skimping on a quality mouse is like bringing a plastic spoon to a steak-eating contest. Without the right tool (er, mouse) for the job, you'll be ill-equipped for saving the world or getting that server-first raid boss kill. Logitech's G500 is a wonderful (and wonderfully inexpensive) all-around mouse. It's built to last and comes with 10 buttons, a dual-mode scroll wheel, and adjustable DPI (with a maximum rating of 5700). Game on!

WHAT MAKES A MOUSE?

Weight

The G500 comes with 27 grams of adjustable weights for max control.



The buttons above this indicator are used to adjust the mouse's DPI.

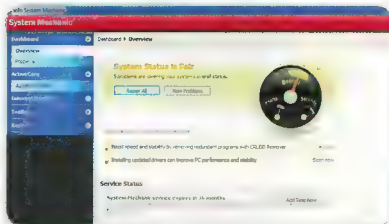


SOFTWARE

PERFORMANCE

Hardware upgrades aren't the only way to increase the performance of your gaming machine. There are several inexpensive (and even free) software options for optimizing and protecting your computer. None of these will likely provide a substantial performance boost when it comes to gaming, but they'll certainly help keep your PC problem free!

SYSTEM MECHANIC >



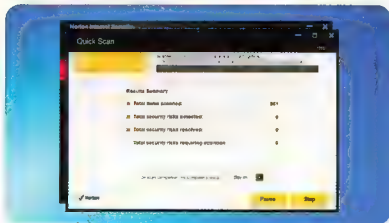
Ever tire of manually installing driver updates, defragging your hard drive, or eliminating useless junk on your computer? Yeah, thought so. *System Mechanic* is a great tool with a huge suite of optimization features. Not only will it automatically update your device



drivers, but you can also use it to defrag your disks, remove unused programs, and automatically optimize your Internet connection settings to improve your connection speeds. It's quick to set up, easy to use, and for \$44.95, you get more than 50 performance features that will undoubtedly make your rig run faster. Granted, it will likely be more beneficial to users whose hard drives are caked in malware and are choking to death on mounds of old files.

ANTIVIRUS

NORTON ANTIVIRUS >



There's a pretty simple reason why I included an antivirus program in this list: if your PC is bogged down by fatal viruses and murderous malware, you're probably not doing a whole lot of gaming. And that's... uh, kind of a problem. Chances are good you've invested a decent chunk of change into your machine—so don't skimp on protection. (An infected computer is a sad computer.)

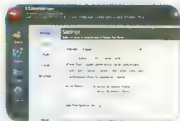
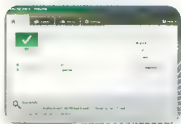
Norton Internet Security 2012 is loaded with some of the most advanced security

features out there: from proactive Internet protection from harmful websites to a downloads scanner that can tell you within seconds if a file is potentially dangerous, you can rest assured knowing that your PC is protected to the max. It even comes equipped with an anti-spyware program to keep your personal information safe.



MICROSOFT SECURITY ESSENTIALS

This is a basic (and free!) antivirus program that's very effective. Download at bit.ly/microsoftav



CCLEANER

The ultimate free program for cleaning up all the old junk cluttering your hard drive. Download at <http://bit.ly/CCleaner>

NINITE

Though www.ninite.com is a website instead of an actual program, it makes installing and updating fantastic, free software a cinch.



MAINTENANCE

Preventative maintenance is an important part of ensuring your PC remains gaming ready. Simple things—such as rearranging internal cables for more airflow and dusting out the interior of your computer—can have a substantial impact on the lifespan of your hardware.

MAINTAINING YOUR PC

DEFRAG YOUR DISK >

When you install a program to a mechanical hard drive, all of the data is lumped together in one area. But as you begin to delete programs and install new ones, free space gets holed up from pockets of data—thus, your drive becomes fragmented. Defragging simply rearranges all data into a continuous group, which can increase the speed of sluggish drives. Luckily, Windows 7 automatically defrags your hard drive by default. To tweak the defrag schedule, go to Start > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Task Scheduler. Here, go to Task Scheduler Library > Microsoft > Windows > Defrag.



CABLE CLEAN UP

REROUTING YOUR CABLES

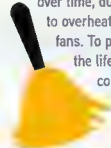
Every component in your computer is connected to your motherboard via cables—leave those things unattended and the guts of your PC will start to look like some kind of cybernetic spider lair. Most modern cases come with cable-routing cutouts in the motherboard tray—make use of them! If not, use zip ties to tidy up your rat's nest of wires. That means more air and less dust for your PC, which is good.



DUSTING OUT

DUSTING YOUR HARDWARE

As fans blow air in and out of your PC, dust will begin to build up and adhere to your components. As this continues over time, dust will eventually cause your hardware to overheat, and can even choke out your internal fans. To prevent this from happening (and to extend the lifespan of your PC), pick up a can or two of compressed air and give your computer a good dusting—especially if you haven't done so in a few months. Just be sure to make this a regular habit: Once a month or so will do.



EASY BREATHING



INCREASE AIRFLOW

Speaking of air, the more airflow you have in your computer, the better. Your components—especially your CPU and videocard—tend to run pretty darn hot once you load up resource-intensive games, so keeping those parts cool will prevent your PC from overheating. You can install additional fans if your case has room for them, but it's important that you create an internal airflow pattern. For example, you can use intake fans to suck cool air into the case from one location and use exhaust fans to blow the hot air out of your case in another area. Just don't create dead zones where hot air might get trapped!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

SCHEDULE VIRUS/MALWARE SCANS

Running regular PC check-ups used to be a tedious process. Now, you can turn your computer into its own doctor by scheduling automatic virus scans and software updates. I prefer to let these processes run overnight, so I don't have to worry about updates and scans interrupting my day-to-day computer use—there's nothing quite as infuriating as a mandatory reboot occurring during the middle of a raid. Sorry, guildies!



TIPS 'N' TRICKS

Keep your drivers up to date! Visit your hardware manufacturer's websites or use software to do so.

Backup all your personal documents and save games to an external hard drive or to the cloud!

Uninstall all those unwanted programs correctly with a program such as *IObit Uninstaller*.

Keep track of the serial number and tech support number for each of your components... just in case.

Keep your actual desktop clean by wiping dust from your mouse, keyboard, and fan filters.

Want more speed? Read up on overclocking and give that a try (in small increments).

TROPICO 4 MODERN TIMES

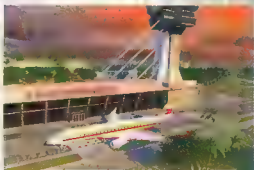
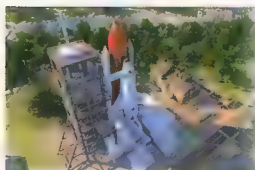
REQUIRES FULL VERSION
OF TROPICO 4!

"A MUST-GET FOR FANS OF EL PRESIDENTE!"
NESD.COM

"...TURNS TROPICO 4 INTO A RICHER,
DEEPER-LAYERED, AND MEATIER GAME!"
GAME DYNAMO

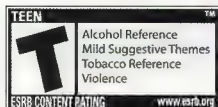
"AWESOME!"
GAMEON PODCAST

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE, EL PRESIDENTE!



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TOP PICKS



TOP PICKS

RATINGS BREAKDOWN:



Hey, meet the crew!

@GAMER wants you to know about the best-of-the-best games out now or coming soon, so we've put together a different kind of Geek Squad to help you out.

This month, we ask the gamer panel:

We review *Kinect Star Wars* in this issue, but what's your favorite *Star Wars* game of all time?



David Chapman



Andrew Hayward



Ryan Scott



Ryan Tallonick



NOT PICKS

The following games did not make the @GAMER cut:

- Deadliest Warrior: Ancient Combat
- Ridge Racer (for PS Vita)

- 64 KINECT STAR WARS
- 66 RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION RACCOON CITY
- 68 THE WITCHER 2: ASSASSINS OF KINGS
- 70 SNIPER ELITE V2
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- 76 KINECT RUSH
- 77 DEVIL MAY CRY HD COLLECTION
- 78 XENoblade CHRONICLES
- 79 BLADES OF TIME
- 80 YAKUZA: DEAD SOULS
- 81 RIDGE RACER UNBOUNDED

MINI-REVIEWS

- 82 Kid Icarus: Uprising
- 82 LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7
- 83 Mortal Kombat
- 83 Spirit Camera: The Cursed Memoir



KINECT

STAR WARS

A Jedi of all trades • Words: Chuck Osborn

If you hold *Star Wars* as an untouchable artifact—one that shouldn't be subject to a dancing Han Solo or runaway Rancor—then *Kinect Star Wars* isn't for you. Yes, this motion-controlled experience goes from canon to camp in less than 12 parsecs, and can destroy the childhoods of the overly Force-sensitive.

For those willing to embrace the absurdity, *Kinect Star Wars* may be the reason you bought a Kinect in the first place. Divided into five different games—*Jedi Destiny*, *Podracing*, *Rancor Rampage*, *Galactic Dance Off*, and the unlockable *Duels of Fate* mode—it makes the most of Microsoft's first-generation motion-sensing hardware. There were times while playing *Jedi Destiny*, the main campaign that casts you as a Jedi in training, that—while swinging at battle droids with the imaginary lightsaber in my right hand and prepping a Force Push with my left arm—I forgot that it was just a game.

Those were brief moments, though. The campaign is a railed adventure that has you battling with lightsabers one moment, zooming through a forest on a Speeder Bike the next, and then shooting down enemy ships in space combat, among many others. It's paced well for the Kinect, with brief action sequences offset by cinematic rest periods. Complete a duel in *Jedi Destiny* and you'll unlock *Duels of Fate*, a mode that lets you cross swords with the likes of Count Dooku and Darth Vader. One-on-one duels clarify the game's limitations, as the deliberate mechanics of blocking, attacking, and using the Force to hit your opponent keep you from reenacting the sweeping swordplay of the Luke-versus-Vader battle from *Return of the Jedi*.

The other subgames are surprisingly fun, especially *Podracing*, where you race through six tracks from Mos Eisley to Coruscant using your arms to steer, trigger speed boosts, and slam competitors into obstacles. *Rancor Rampage*

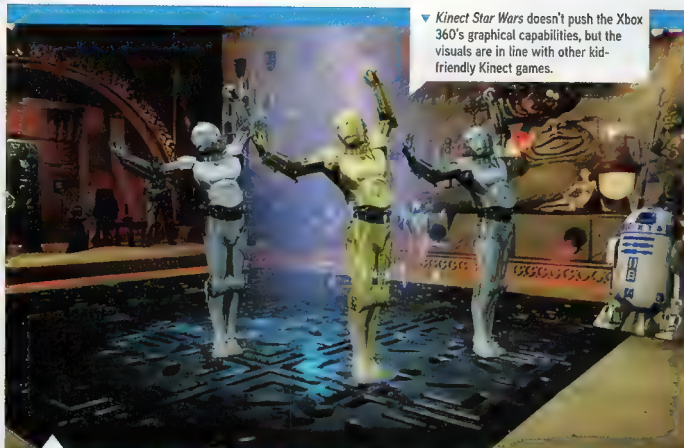
is a smash-em-up in which you, a giant carnivorous reptomammal, tear up a town and eat people. And there's the thoroughly ridiculous *Galactic Dance Off*, a *Dance Central*-clone where Princess Leia, Han Solo, and others kick it (see "Rock Out With Your Bot Out" sidebar).

Kids in particular will enjoy the dancing and smashing, and can share the fun with a second player. Though *Kinect Star Wars* runs into some of the control and response issues common to Kinect games, the Force in this one is strong enough to make it a hit with any family.



▲ Enemies in duels telegraph their strikes, giving you time to block the direction they're coming from.





▼ *Kinect Star Wars* doesn't push the Xbox 360's graphical capabilities, but the visuals are in line with other kid-friendly Kinect games.

ROCK OUT WITH YOUR BOT OUT \\\ *Kinect Star Wars*' most notorious subgame is Galactic Dance Off, which lets you shake it to Star Wars-ized hits such as "Hologram Girl" (aka "Hollaback Girl") and "Princess in a Battle" (aka "Genie in a Bottle") with dance moves like the "Trash Compactor" and "Chewie Hug." Almost as cheesy as the infamous "Star Wars Christmas Special," it's too weird and funny to be missed. Highlight: Han Solo rising from the carbonite freezing chamber to bust a move.



GOIN' ON A...



▲ Rancor Rampage is like a *Star Wars* version of the old arcade game, *Rampage*, but in glorious 3D.



▲ The droids and people glowing green can be picked up and thrown or eaten for health.

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



KINECT STAR WARS

INFO
Publisher: Microsoft/LucasArts
Developer: Terminal Reality
Platforms: Xbox 360 (Kinect required)

RELEASE DATE
April 3, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
2-player splitscreen

GENRE
Action/Racing/Dance

SUITABLE FOR
Anyone who ever waved a paper tube around as a pretend lightsaber

WHAT'S GREAT:
♥ A diverse array of game types for the entire family
♥ With full-body motion controls, you're "in" the game
WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
✖ Dueling is too slow and methodical to feel like dueling
✖ Kinect controls and responsiveness still a work in progress

RYAN SAYS:
Kinect Star Wars has some good, some bad, and some... strange (yes, Galactic Dance Off, I'm looking at you).

OVERALL RATING:

3.75





▼ It's soldier against soldier (and sometimes a zombie) in the series offshoot, *Operation Raccoon City*.

RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION RACCOON CITY

Can this spin-off about Umbrella make it rain? • Words: David Wolinsky

Let's kick this review off by getting your central, burning question out of the way immediately: Is this really a Resident Evil game? Well, no. That became exceedingly obvious in the opening moments, when I discovered I could run and shoot simultaneously—a longstanding point of contention among fans of previous entries in the storied zombie-blasting series.

Truthfully, this is a Resident Evil game in name only: The producers have made it clear that the game, which sees members of Umbrella's Delta Team infiltrate the titular city to retrieve an experimental virus, is hypothetical, and not part of the main RE storyline. It's a parallel narrative, set between the

events of RE2 and RE3: Nemesis, that will likely never be referred to again. But just because familiar faces and plot points crop up doesn't mean it's really a Resident Evil game—this is more like a tribute band paying homage to the original in the headliner slot.

Okay, so what is this game? It's, at best, a mostly competent comfort-food squad-based action-shooter. It's playable offline, but you're better served hopping online, because if you bite it in the campaign offline, you'll have to start over. Online, your comrades can revive you. It's a two-pronged issue, potentially, because there's no way to issue commands to your AI allies...and if someone joins your online mission mid-level, there's a chance they will

hop in considerably behind where your team is. As I was nearing the game's end, my unit was unable to progress because a new player wasn't able to board the elevator the rest of the team was already inside. We were stuck in midair...and eventually just stuck.

There are other issues, too, with hit detection and an artificially inflated difficulty—even on easy, you'll die a lot and be shocked when it takes six sniper rounds to take down some enemies. Despite these drawbacks, though, the game is somehow brainless fun. There's no shortage of things to shoot. That's nothing unique, but Operation Raccoon City isn't trying to be unique...just fun. And it is, with some glaring asterisks. ☹



WHAT IF...? \\\ Set around the same time as RE2 and RES, *Operation Raccoon City* imagines what would have happened if Umbrella infiltrated the metropolis post-outbreak to destroy all evidence linking the T-virus back to them and eliminate any survivors, like zombie dogs.

T-VIRUS ON THE LOOSE \\\



▲ One side effect of the T-virus is abnormal tongue growth. Great for the lead singer of Kiss, bad for Umbrella Security.



▲ Jill still hasn't learned that tank tops don't provide adequate protection from zombie attacks.

▼ No amount of herbs and first-aid spray is going to cure "Giant Eye in Shoulder" syndrome.



PS3 XBOX360 PC

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS 12



RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION RACCOON CITY

INFO

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Slant Six Games, Capcom
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

March 20, 2012
(PC: May 18, 2012)

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 8-player online

GENRE

Third-person shooter

SUITABLE FOR

Exceedingly open-minded
Resident Evil fans



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Campaign offers wall-to-wall running and gunning
- ♥ Diverse online modes
- ♥ Extends the *RE* mythology, albeit in a hypothetical scenario



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Wacky hit detection
- ✖ Hiccups in level progression when playing online



ANDY SAYS:

I hoped that *Operation Raccoon City* would launch a strong line of *RE* shooters, but this wasn't the best starting point.

OVERALL RATING:

2.75



GAMER



THE WITCHER 2: ASSASSINS OF KINGS

ENHANCED EDITION

Let it put a spell on you • Words: Taylor.Cocke

Geralt of Rivia isn't one to mince words. In fact, most of the time he lets his dual swords do the talking. Which is good, because in the world of *The Witcher 2*, straight shooters are desperately lacking.

After failing to prevent King Foltest, a man he was meant to guard, from being assassinated, Geralt is thrown into a political struggle involving rebellion, racism, and complex legal issues. Depending on the choices he makes, control of kingdoms shift, important people die or live, and entirely different story sections unfold. In fact, the game's second act changes almost entirely depending on choices made in the first. Decisions hold real weight in *The Witcher 2*, making the story truly one of your own choosing.

Combat is equally choice-ridden. *Witchers* have a large variety of skills, and Geralt is no exception. He's a sword master, skilled in magical Signs, and knowledgeable about alchemy, and you can upgrade his skills to fit your exact needs. Prefer to stand back and cast spells, avoiding the oh-so-dangerous edge of your opponents' swords? Go right ahead and build up the Signs skill tree. Prefer a more up-close-and-personal attack? The Swordsmanship tree is for you. Further adding to the depth, Mutations allow you to further customize your chosen skills.

With all of this choice, though, comes a high learning curve. Some players may be turned off by the difficult early hours of the game, as the in-game tutorial is short and somewhat lacking. Learning the combat's intricacies and finding your personal, customized sweet spot, however, is immensely rewarding.

NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY, THE WITCHER 2 IS SOMETHING TO BEHOLD

The story can be much the same. Without wasting time with exposition, it moves at a fast clip, demanding you keep up and rewarding those who put the time into exploring its dense lore. Each corner of the world has importance, and it's captivating to find each nook and cranny.

Not to be taken lightly, *The Witcher 2* is certainly something to behold. If you're willing to put in some effort, it will give back everything you put into it. Stick with it and you'll find that it's simply one of the best games out there.

◀ **The Right Tools** ◀
Witchers are primarily monster hunters, so carrying the right gear while staying nimble is essential.





▼ The world of *The Witcher 2* is an unforgiving one, with harsh justice dispensed at every turn.

EXPLAINING "ENHANCED" \\\ Wondering about the "Enhanced Edition" subtitle? Just know that you're getting the best version of the game. Released for the PC last year, *The Witcher 2* took its time getting to consoles, but it has a lot to show for it. For starters, there's hours of new content, including entire new areas in the final chapter of the game, complete with compelling quests. These new additions fold seamlessly into the game, so returning fans will have new content to explore and enjoy. There's also a slew of new cut-scenes, shedding some light on some of the events that unfold during and before Geralt's quest.



POTENT POTABLES

Mixing potions is a very important part of a witcher's job, but knowing which potions to bring into battle is even more important. Fortunately for Geralt, he's an expert on the matter. Whether he's mixing up a Swallow potion to fortify his health a bit, or a Cat to allow him to see in the dark, the alchemy system is streamlined yet complex. Each potion can take a variety of ingredients, changing their effects slightly.

SOUND OFF

With such a complex, vibrant world, there were bound to be a few minor technical issues with *The Witcher 2*. Most notable are the occasional skipping dialogue sounds and texture popping. Fortunately, they do little to take away from the powerful story that CD Projekt has managed to put to disc.



▲ Despite being released for PC first, *The Witcher 2* has been optimized for console—and it still looks great.

XBOX 360



THE WITCHER 2: ASSASSINS OF KINGS ENHANCED EDITION

INFO

Publisher: Warner Bros.
Interactive Entertainment
Developer: CD Projekt
Platforms: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

April 17, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Action-RPG

SUITABLE FOR

Lore readers, explorers, decision makers

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ A fascinating tale of deception, intrigue, and murder
- ♥ Choices hold real weight in the world
- ♥ Combat is deep and rewarding for those who take the time to learn it

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Its hardcore tendencies make it difficult for newcomers to get into the groove

CHARLIE SAYS

I've been anxiously awaiting the console version of *The Witcher 2*, because...well, I can ring up some achievements.

OVERALL RATING:

4.5



gamer



America's Best
You're on your own against well-armed Nazi forces who won't quit.

Set Deadly Traps
Tripwires, land mines, and dynamite are explosive surprises.

SNIPER ELITE V2

One sniper against the entire Nazi army? Piece of cake... — Words: Hillary Goldstein

Few things are more satisfying in a shooter than scoring a headshot. *Sniper Elite V2* takes that satisfaction to unprecedented levels with a glorious new kill-cam. Any long-distance kill earns a slow-motion cinematic showing an X-ray view of the bullet entering and exiting your enemy's body. It's horrific, chilling, and gratifying all at the same time. This is *Sniper Elite V2*'s big innovation.

Scoring those amazing shots isn't easy, thanks to realistic bullet physics. Gravity affects ammunition, meaning that your expensed lead gradually drops over long distances, so carefully judging distance and aiming high is a key to success.

While sniping is your primary function—the game is called *Sniper*, after all—as an infiltrator you have a few other tricks up your sleeve. Place a land mine on a corpse and an inquisitive enemy combatant may get blown up, or lay a tripwire across an opening to protect yourself in case Nazis try to sneak up behind you. You can even set down dynamite

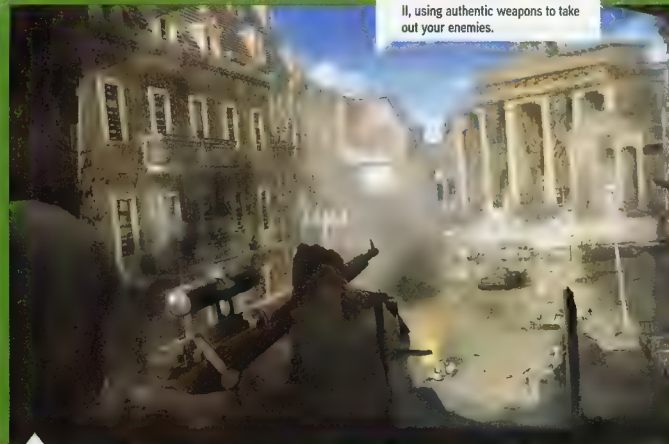
and shoot it from a distance to take out a group of enemies with a single shot.

Though you have some explosive options in your arsenal, stealth is the key to survival. Each of the short levels becomes infinitely more difficult if you brazenly attack your enemies. Making noise or leaving a body out in the open can quickly triple the number of baddies in your path. If you have the patience to tiptoe around and avoid making a ruckus, you're rewarded with less opposition and therefore fewer deaths at the hands of the Nazis. I'm not a patient person, so it's fortunate for me that you never automatically fail a level just because you're spotted.

Sniper Elite V2 comes with all of the same old frustrations that have driven me nuts about games with a heavy dependency on stealth—there's a ton of trial-and-error gameplay and harsh penalties when you're discovered. Yet despite its issues, sneaking around and offing Nazis is always a good time, especially when each kill is punctuated with such impressively macabre style. ☺

◀ The infamous Nazi leader makes a special appearance. It's your task to disappear him.

▼ Visit real locations from World War II, using authentic weapons to take out your enemies.



BROTHERS IN ARMS \\\ You don't have to face the Nazis alone. A friend can team up with you online to rampage through the campaign in co-op or to test out three unique modes. Kill Tally has you facing waves of enemies, while Bombing Run requires you to fix a Jeep and escape an impending air strike. Overwatch is the most interesting, where one person is the sniper and the other sneaks on the ground, scouting for enemies.

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS \\\



01 WAR IS HARD

Outnumbered and out-gunned, your shooter skills are put to the test. You may even find it unfairly difficult.

02 END HITLER

Pre-order *Sniper Elite V2*, and download free DLC where you get to rewrite history by putting a bullet in Hitler's kisser.

03 DEADLY SILENT

Sneak up on enemies and take them down before they can alert their friends to your location.



GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS 12



SNIPER ELITE V2

INFO

Publisher: 505 Games
Developer: Rebellion
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

May 1, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

2-player online co-op

GENRE

Third-person shooter

SUITABLE FOR

Anyone who hates Nazis and loves headshots



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Gruesome kill-cam makes for satisfying assassinations
- ♥ Realistic bullet physics and an extra level of challenge
- ♥ You get to kill Hitler



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ The simplistic AI faces the wrong direction sometimes
- ✗ Stealth aspects can be frustrating

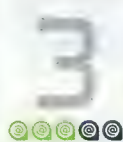


CHARLIE SAYS:

Every shooter includes an optional sniper rifle, but I love that *Sniper Elite V2* treats the weapon almost as a form of art.



OVERALL RATING:





▼ Giant elite monsters (known as BAMs—big...monsters) make for some intense battles.

MMO: Combat Evolved • Words: Ryan Taljonick

Combat in MMORPGs hasn't changed much over the years. The typical system of punctuating auto-attacks with input-based abilities means battles have a tendency to rely more on "rotations" than the actual act of swinging a sword or slinging a spell. For a long time, I've wondered if we'd ever see an evolution beyond this archaic (though effective) system...and then I played Tera.

At its core, Tera employs traditional MMO elements: You'll level up, take on crafting professions, hit level cap, then dive into raids and PvP. Yet it's the implementation of a real-time combat system similar to those found in *The Witcher 2* or *Skyrim* that makes Tera such a rewarding experience.

Every mouse click yields an attack. A targeting reticle in the center of the screen means both melee and ranged classes must properly aim to successfully land a hit. For ranged fighters, the experience is comparable to a third-person shooter. Lining up shots or spells and learning when to use "Backstep" abilities (think the Hunter's Disengage in *WoW*) to build distance between yourself and your opponent is integral to survival. For melee, guessing where the enemy will be by the time you swing your giant sword becomes a

tricky game of anticipation, and landing a blow has devastating results. Healers? You have to aim your spells, too.

Of course, there are still unique skills for every class, and the customizable user interface has a familiar look—but you won't be staring at your ability cooldowns on your action bars here. A skill-chaining system means you can build

custom combos for every class by linking abilities together. Once you use an ability, the next chained skill will pop up on your screen and is easily activated by pressing the spacebar. Also, because your attacks will hit if aimed properly

(there's no stat for chance to hit in Tera), you don't have to worry about whiffing an essential attack in a rotation.

Just choose your class wisely, as each has a concrete role and is restricted to one preset weapon type. Be prepared to stare at the same-ish two-handed sword / staff / bow / axe for hundreds of hours because the new weapons you'll obtain often look nearly identical to what you already had. Still, Tera has plenty of quests, dungeons, loot, and exciting social features (see sidebar) to entice you to push on. Lackluster weapon variety is a small price to pay considering this is an MMO in which your weapon doesn't swing itself. ☺

EVERY MOUSE CLICK YIELDS AN ATTACK

TERA

▼ The Berserker is a melee DPS class that uses a giant, slow-moving two-handed axe. Hits like a truck.



VANARCHY REIGNS \\\ Tera has a unique social feature: Vanarchs. These are players elected by the community to rule one of Tera's 20 provinces for three-week periods. When the election process begins, only guild leaders can campaign. Once elected, a Vanarch can activate or disable world boss encounters, special vendors, teleporters, and can even collect taxes from voters. Abuse power, though, and expect your guild to get blacklisted by others.

PUBLIC QUESTS

High-level zones have a public questing system; anyone in the area can join the quest and group up to take down a high-level world boss and score some loot.



▲ No factions means PvP is a free-for-all, and guilds can declare war on one another to engage in massive battles.



▲ Finding a group for dungeons is always easy, thanks to a cross-server matchmaking system.

CLASS LIST \\\

Archer: ...
Sorcerer: ...
Slayer: ...
Berserker: ...
Lancer: ...
Warrior: ...
Mystic: ...
Priest: ...



GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



TERA

INFO

Publisher: En Masse
 Entertainment
 Developer: Bluehole Studio
 Platforms: PC

RELEASE DATE

May 1, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Massively multiplayer

GENRE

MMORPG

SUITABLE FOR

MMO lovers looking for a change of pace

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Fantastically engaging real-time action combat
- ♥ Cross-server PvE queues
- ♥ Awesome guild-versus-guild battles

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Classes are restricted to one type of weapon
- ✖ Not a lot of playstyle variety within each class

ANDY SAYS:

I've had a few looks at Tera during its development, and its combat improvements should add to the enjoyment.

OVERALL RATING:

4

RISEN 2: DARK WATERS



Hardcore RPG, with a side order of pirates • Words: Nathan Meunier

Breaking away from the fantasy-rich vibe of the original, *Risen 2: Dark Waters* changes course for a more pirate-themed jaunt filled with rum-soaked fisticuffs, voodoo curses, and island-hopping mischief. The welcome shift brings fresh momentum to your quest to help the Faranga coast squash its ship-destroying Kraken problems, even if a few residual issues still linger.

The cutthroat pirate life is every bit as unforgiving and thrilling as you'd think. As in the original, death comes easily in *Risen 2*, making "save often" a constant mantra. Falling victim to mere forest animals early on is hilarious—except when cumbersome combat mechanics are the culprit. But the tough-love approach is an enjoyable challenge rather than a drawback.

Every hard-earned victory feels gratifying, and slowly amassing new skills across a handful of key disciplines opens lots of clever options for tackling quests. Underhanded means, such as pickpocketing and intimidation, are useful

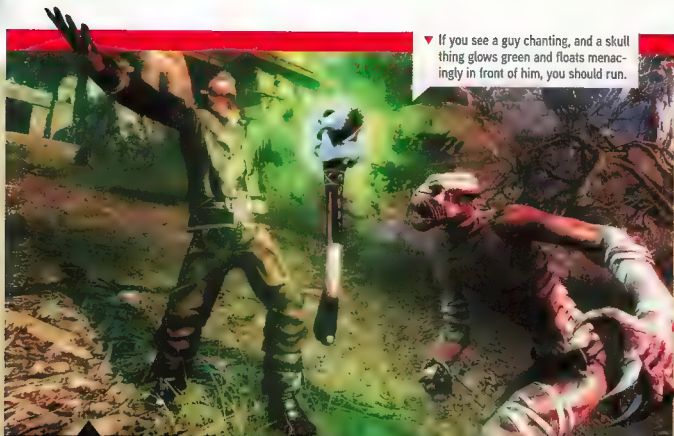
**AS IN THE
ORIGINAL, DEATH
COMES EASILY...**

tactics, though being chivalrous and honorable has its own rewards. With lots of flexibility in how you approach each mission, it's fascinating to experiment and watch the repercussions of your decisions play out.

Stumbling on scenic beauty is common, particularly when roaming balmy beaches and lush tropical forests. In contrast, character designs are less impressive, and sporadic visual bugs detract from the atmosphere. Even so, the curse-spewing, booze-swilling characters themselves help carry the adventure through its rough patches with their distinct personalities, colorful dialogue, and strong voice work.

Aspects of the game's design are shoddy in spots, yet *Risen 2* is tenacious in the way it sinks its hooks in and pulls you along for the wild ride. Were it simply more of the same, mustering the patience for another long slog would be more of a struggle. But this memorable pirate-focused twist on the franchise will captivate you despite its flaws.





▼ If you see a guy chanting, and a skull thing glows green and floats menacingly in front of him, you should run.

"I'LL SWALLOW YOUR SOUL"

The nefarious powers of voodoo are among the coolest new tools in your arsenal, assuming you choose to ally with the jungle natives rather than venture off to enlist the aid of the Inquisition. After jumping through lots of hoops for the Shaganumbi tribe, you gain access to the dark arts, letting you craft voodoo dolls, possess characters and foes, fling curses, and engage in other diabolical deeds.

▼ KICK TO THE JUNK \\\

HI-YAH! JUDO CHOP!

Though it shows improvement, combat is still an awkward, unwieldy thing in *Risen 2: Dark Waters*. Guns, parrots, sabers, and other pirate-appropriate armaments are fabulous additions to your arsenal, but it's often hard to use them effectively against more deadly adversaries. The more surefire strategy for success is to employ dirty tricks and cheap shots to gain the upper hand.



▲ Give nasty enemies the ol' boot to knock them off balance and break up their attack chains.



▲ Careful...given the chance, this beast will tear you apart in a matter of seconds.



▲ Buried goodies are hidden everywhere, rewarding persistent treasure seekers.

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



RISEN 2: DARK WATERS

INFO

Publisher: Deep Silver
Developer: Piranha Bytes (PC),
Wizarbox (PS3, Xbox 360)
Platforms: PC (also on PS3,
Xbox 360)
Reviewed on: PC

RELEASE DATE

April 27, 2012 (PS3, Xbox 360)
May 22, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Action-RPG

SUITABLE FOR

Serious RPG heads,
old-school *Gothic* fans

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Exotic pirating world draws you in
- ♥ Lots of leeway for different approaches to missions
- ♥ Colorful, well-crafted characters

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Combat is still a bit shoddy
- ✖ Bugs and minor performance issues

CHARLIE SAYS:

Though it's not perfect, there are definitely some cool aspects to *Risen 2* that RPGers will want to check out.

OVERALL RATING:

3.75





XBOX 360

**KINECT RUSH: A DISNEY PIXAR ADVENTURE****INFO**

Publisher: Microsoft Studio
Developer: Asobo Studio
Platforms: Xbox 360
(Kinect required)

RELEASE DATE

March 20, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

2-player co-op

GENRE

Action

SUITABLE FOR

Families or adults who want to reclaim their youth

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

KINECT RUSH

A DISNEY PIXAR ADVENTURE

Who doesn't want to be a kid again? Words: Anne Lewis

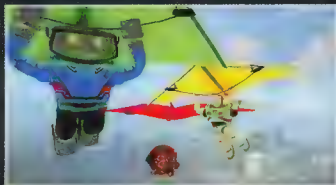
It's highly likely that I enjoy playing make believe far more than any grown woman should, but I feel like *Kinect Rush* is a world of imagination made specifically for the child in me.

The silent protagonist heads from the bus stop into Pixar Park—a central hub where children cajole you into helping them act out their fan fiction. Each kid in the park has a scenario based on a Pixar movie to explore—from jogging over the rooftops of Paris in *Ratatouille* to racing down the streets of Tokyo alongside *Holly Swiftwell* from *Cars*.

Kinect Rush is a fun, simple experience aimed at families, but there are a few areas of the game where you may feel a strain. The *Cars* levels are probably the most tiring, as steering requires you to hold out your arms like you would behind the wheel of an actual car—not the most comfortable position to maintain. Much of the game involves pumping your arms in a running motion or leaping over obstacles, both of which require stamina and a large, clear space; maneuvering and turning in a tight area can prove to be a problem. Like all things,

Kinect Rush is best in moderation, but the game is short—with only three chapters per world—though levels can be replayed to get higher scores and unlock playable characters, such as Buzz Lightyear and Lightning McQueen.

If waving your arms to fly like a superhero or rafting down a river chasing after a runaway house doesn't make you feel like a giddy child, then nothing will. Close your blinds and lose yourself in youthful fantasies. **B**



▲ Don't recognize the robot? It's okay—you play as an unknown character until you can unlock familiar faces.

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ The cartoony art style will appeal to Pixar fans
- ♥ Episodes feel genuine and creative

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Each movie only has three episodes
- ✖ Some actions wear you out quickly

ANDY SAYS:

Kinect Rush is a great marriage between the Kinect motion controls and Pixar's vibrant movie worlds.

OVERALL RATING:

4



gamer

FAMILY FUN

Everything is more fun when you play with the ones you love. In a solo game, an AI character takes the place of your partner, helping you solve puzzles and shouting directions to guide you along. When you're playing with a friend or family member, your teammate can help you through levels while racking up even more coins for a better end score. Teamwork is key and players will often need to both jump on buttons to progress through levels, so it's good to stick close together.



▲ *The Incredibles* is just one of the game's five featured films.

▼ A high-definition facelift doesn't make the monsters any prettier, just more detailed in their ugliness.



DEVIL MAY CRY HD

This HD Collection might bring a tear to DMC fans' eyes. • Words: David Chapman

It's hard to believe that it's been over 10 years since Capcom introduced Devil May Cry's signature blend of guns and swordplay on PlayStation 2. With a new, emo-inspired Dante set to take center stage in Ninja Theory's franchise reboot, Capcom is giving fans one more chance to revisit the cocky swagger of the original Son of Sparda with the Devil May Cry HD Collection for PS3 and Xbox 360.

The Devil May Cry HD Collection brings the first three DMC games (Devil May Cry, Devil May Cry 2, and Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening Special Edition) together to current-generation consoles, complete with new high-definition textures, widescreen support, Trophies/Achievements, and a bonus "vault" filled with art and audio assets tossed in for good measure. On paper, this sounds like just about everything DMC fans could want, but it's execution that matters most...and that's where this HD Collection stumbles.

Although the in-game visuals have been given an HD boost, the cinematic sequences remain relatively unchanged. As a result, anytime you pick up an item or watch a CG cut-scene, the video switches from widescreen to standard without any of the crispness of the in-game textures. Also,

those high-resolution textures look like they were thrown onto the original models, which are really showing their age after more than a decade.

It's hard to deny that this collection is still fun to play, though. All three games maintain the fast-paced hack 'n' slash action that has defined the series over the last 10 years. Unfortunately, this collection's high-definition facelift is just shy of a malpractice suit. ☹

COMPARISON BREAKOUT



This comparison highlights the attention to detail added to the collection's new HD textures. Take a closer look, though, and you'll notice underneath that shiny coat of paint still beats the polygonal, angular heart of the last generation of consoles.



▲ Dante says, "Buy the Devil May Cry HD Collection or the clown gets it. Oh, who am I kidding...he'll get it anyway."

PS3 XBOX 360



DEVIL MAY CRY HD COLLECTION

INFO

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Pipeworks Software
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

April 3, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Action

SUITABLE FOR

Devil May Cry fans eager to re-experience "classic" Dante before the new emo version hits the scene

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ One more chance to play the classic Dante before the reboot
- ♥ Smooth, fast DMC gameplay remains intact

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ The games are all beginning to show their age
- ✗ The "HD" update doesn't apply to cut-scenes or item popups

RYAN SAYS:

Personally, I really dug this HD revamp. The facelift is underwhelming, but the old DMC gameplay I love holds up great!

OVERALL RATING:

2.75



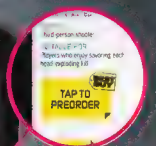


GAMER

DIGITAL EDITION



We have pulled the best screen shots from our archives



Read the preview and now you're ready to buy the game? Here

TAP TO PREORDER

Game trailers and quick updates from the editors

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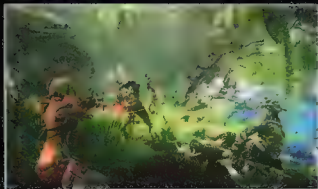
BLADES OF TIME

Time is of the essence • Words: Nellie Johnson

In 2009, *X-Blades* was the action-adventure title gamers loved to hate. Despite being slammed for its repetitive gameplay and cheesy, thong-wearing heroine, developer Gaijin Entertainment has bravely made a sequel—of the spiritual variety anyway—and called it *Blades of Time*. In it, we're reunited with titillating treasure hunter Ayumi, who's ditched the cartoon style in favor of a more realistic 3D look, and traded the thong for what appears to be a pair of Lara Croft's adventurer short-shorts. She also seems to have borrowed Ms. Croft's British accent and uses it throughout the game to deliver ceaseless (and totally goofy) commentary. The changes aren't all on the surface, however; Gaijin's made changes to gameplay as well.

With the overall cheese factor dialed back a smidge, the simple RPG system makes for a collection of flashy and fun-to-use combos, and ample checkpoints keep you from pulling your hair out during the more challenging sections. As the title hints, the game's focus has expanded from Ayumi's undying affection for bladed weapons to include her newly gained ability to turn back time. This near-unlimited rewind ability enables you to create multiple Ayumi combat clones, a skill that comes in

handy when confronted with a two-person door puzzle or a big group of enemies. All this is fairly entertaining, but *Blades of Time* is ultimately sabotaged by its forgettable story, cheap-shot-prone bosses, pointless co-op, and after-thoughtful online multiplayer. Still, there's some fun to be had—albeit of the “rent instead of buy” variety. **C**



▲ Ayumi can use her gunsword to shoot guys in the face, which is often an easier kill than swinging a blade.



THE GAL'S GOT IT ALL \\\

As time goes on, Ayumi's character grows more complex, and her story becomes more compelling. The game's simple RPG system makes for a collection of flashy and fun-to-use combos, and ample checkpoints keep you from pulling your hair out during the more challenging sections. As the title hints, the game's focus has expanded from Ayumi's undying affection for bladed weapons to include her newly gained ability to turn back time. This near-unlimited rewind ability enables you to create multiple Ayumi combat clones, a skill that comes in



▲ Over time, you'll learn powerful combos that will bring the pain.

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS 12



BLADES OF TIME

INFO

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Gaijin Entertainment
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

March 6, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

2-player co-op, online or local;
2-player competitive online

GENRE

Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR

Gamers who've dreamed of bashing baddies as a shorts-wearing, female Kratos



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Less cheese
- ♥ Cool combos
- ♥ Using time rewind to create a small army of Ayumis



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Lame story
- ✗ Laborious boss fights
- ✗ Pointless multiplayer/co-op



RYAN SAYS:

While I'm glad *Blades of Time* is a solid improvement over *X-Blades*, I really can't bring myself to care about it at all.

OVERALL RATING:

3



GAMER



YAKUZA: DEAD SOULS

INFO

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega
Platforms: PS3

RELEASE DATE

March 13, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Action

SUITABLE FOR

Yakuza fans looking to inject some new...er, "life" into the franchise

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

WHAT'S GREAT:

- Unique, campy twist to the established franchise
- Lots of fan service

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- Visually dated by current standards
- Controls are a jumbled mess

RYAN SAYS:

What can I say? I'm a sucker for zombie games, and this one is a pretty rad twist on the *Yakuza* franchise!

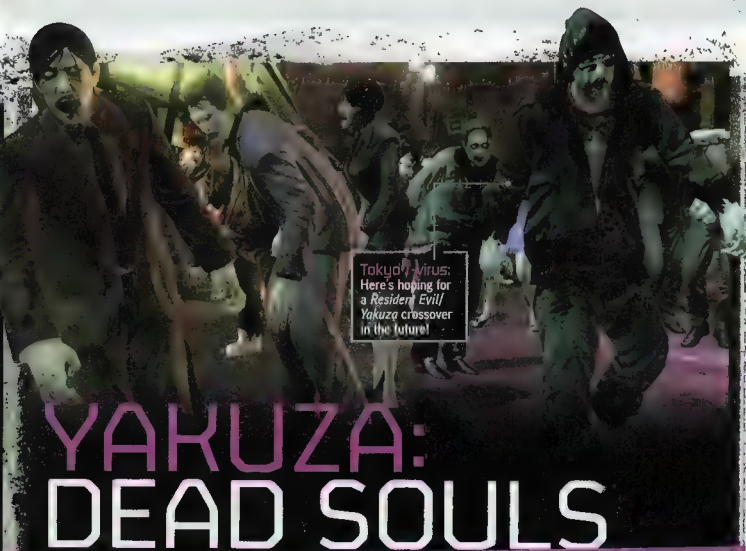


OVERALL RATING:

3.25



GAMER



Tokyo's Virus:
Here's hoping for
a *Resident Evil*/
Yakuza crossover
in the future!

YAKUZA:
DEAD SOULS

You've got to feel for the undead these days. They're like the kickball of the videogame universe. They've been cannon fodder for WWII soldiers, Old West gunslingers, and even photojournalists. Now it's the *Yakuza*'s turn to take aim at a zombie outbreak in Sega's latest entry to its cult game franchise, *Yakuza*, with *Yakuza: Dead Souls*.

Dead Souls takes fans on a "What if...?" tale in which the Kamurocho district of Tokyo (the fictional setting for previous *Yakuza* games) has caught a nasty case of that undead flu bug that seems to be going around. The story is told in four main acts, each focusing on a character from previous games. Although a past familiarity with the *Yakuza* games isn't necessarily required to play *Dead Souls*, fans are going to get the most out of how the characters interact.

Zombies aren't the only thing shambling in *Dead Souls*. The controls also feel like they've already got one foot in the grave. One of the first rules in zombie fighting is don't let 'em get close.

As a result, *Dead Souls* puts a bigger focus on gunplay than on melee. That wouldn't be such a bad thing if it had been better implemented. You'll spend a lot of time relying heavily on the auto-aim feature, especially since you can't actually aim and move at the same time. Constantly fighting against the camera doesn't help the situation, either.

Yakuza: Dead Souls plays like one of those late-night B-movie schlockfests that sing insomniacs to sleep. However, like most of those camp classics, there's still some fun to be milked out of it if you squeeze hard enough.



THE GANG'S ALL HERE

If the idea of the *Yakuza* banding together to fight a zombie outbreak seems a little far-fetched, you might be surprised. Immediately following Japan's devastating earthquake and tsunami last year, the actual *Yakuza* crime families were among the first to provide supplies and aid to those affected by the disaster.



▲ Even in the midst of the zombie apocalypse, there's always time for a Bollywood-style dance number.

RIDGE RACER UNBOUNDED

You may not need brakes in Shatter Bay—but you'll need breaks • Words: Andy Eddy

Since its 1993 coin-op debut, Namco's Ridge Racer series has been delivering thrilling, pedal-to-the-floor arcade-racing action. For the latest installment, Ridge Racer Unbounded, Namco decided to take a right turn in a more smash-and-dash direction (much like the Burnout series), bringing in Finnish developer Bugbear Entertainment (creators of the stunt/racing series, FlatOut) to help.

The foundation is there for a fun experience: Shatter Bay's nine regions give you a multitude of racing events, each with three-star rewards at stake. These include Domination Races, where you maneuver for first, while taking out your opponents; Time Attacks, where you need to hit the finish as fast as possible, earning precious seconds back for each "target" taken out; and Frag Attacks, where you roll your cars—crushed counter as high as you can. A boost meter builds by drifting around turns and fragging; letting it loose gives a big jolt to your speed and destructive force—indeed, you can use it to bust through some terrain and create a "shortcut."

The problems, however, are multiple: AI drivers always seem to have a boost ready (often when you lack turns or frag candidates). Until you've done a fair amount of leveling up, your early races feel like you're driving a Big Wheel. And some shortcuts can send you twisting uncontrollably through the air—fliers beware. In the end, there's more frustration than fun, more swearing than swagger, more fit to be tied than unbounded. **C-**



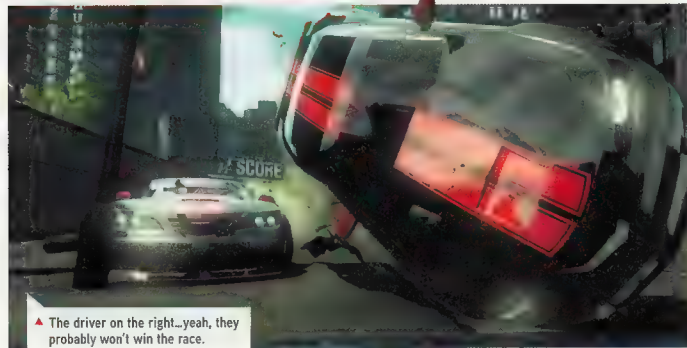
▲ Cop cars aren't too threatening here—not when you're able to nitro-boost into them to score a frag.

YOUR OWN SHATTER BAY

Ridge Racer Unbounded's editing system is so simple, you'll create tracks in mere minutes, which can then be tweaked, decorated, and published for others to enjoy and compete in. Some tracks I saw came with naturally high scores, making them great places for achievement/trophy grabbing and power-leveling, if you're into that.



▲ Sometimes you'll find open terrain where you can floor it. Mostly, you're dodging traffic and obstacles on twisty roads.



▲ The driver on the right—yeah, they probably won't win the race.

PS3 XBOX 360 PC

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS 12



RIDGE RACER UNBOUNDED

INFO

Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Bugbear Entertainment
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC
Reviewed on: PS3, Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

March 27, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 8-player online

GENRE

Racing

SUITABLE FOR

Patient and tolerant racers—
if such creatures actually exist



WHAT'S GREAT

- ♥ Clean presentation
- ♥ Fast race retry reloads
- ♥ Nitro-fueled crashes!



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT

- ✗ Some "shortcuts" result in you spinning out or crashing
- ✗ You need to level up a bunch before you're competitive
- ✗ Not obvious what parts of the world are destructible



RYAN SAYS

I love the concept, but the racing was just too loose for my tastes. Now where did I put my copy of Burnout Paradise?

OVERALL RATING:

3.25



© GAMER



Mini Reviews:

Of course, size doesn't matter. These games are more than worth your attention.

▼ Kid Icarus finally gets to show off his new sandals.



Railed shooter segments let you fly high and slash eye(s).



KID ICARUS: UPRISING



Publisher: Nintendo • Developer: Project Sora
Platforms: 3DS • Words: Ryan Scott

Nintendo's 21-years-in-the-making Kid Icarus sequel isn't what you expected: *Uprising* trades the series' 2D platforming for a third-person shooter that's part on-rails and part free-roaming (through linear levels), with a flashy boss encounter capping each chapter. Once you accept the awkward controls (hammer the L-button to fire, guide your character with the analog pad, and target with the touchscreen) and then realize that autofire makes everything more tolerable, you're in for an amusingly self-aware and fourth-wall-breaking adventure.

Uprising's guided rail-shooter segments are genuinely enjoyable, while the ground levels drag more than they ought to, resulting in a pretty bipolar game. A dynamic (and 100-degree) difficulty slider eases control-related anguish, though the interface is still head-scratchingly obtuse. It's an okay game that could have been great; as-is, it's nothing if not polarizing. @



MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 6-player online
GENRE Third-person shooter/
adventure
RELEASE DATE
March 23, 2012
SUITABLE FOR
Dedicated fans of rail shooters

OVERALL RATING:

3.25



LEGO HARRY POTTER: YEARS 5-7



Publisher: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment • Developer: Traveller's Tales • Platforms: PS Vita • Words: Andrew Hayward

Spanning the events of the final four films, *LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7* again reimagines the fantastical world and characters in the style of the beloved plastic bricks, with levels centering on using various spells to solve puzzles and fight enemies, all while collecting a heap of gold and silver studs. Despite the charming sights and scenarios, the tried-and-true licensed LEGO approach is losing steam with each similar entry, and even the colorful Harry Potter universe can't boost this banal experience.

The PlayStation Vita version doesn't do it many favors, either. New touch controls for spellcasting and duels are good additions, but the low-res video clips look awful, and the game lacks multiplayer—one of the franchise's cornerstones. For Potter fans looking to finish the series on the go, it's an adequate option, but hardly magical.



Single-player only
Action

March 6, 2012

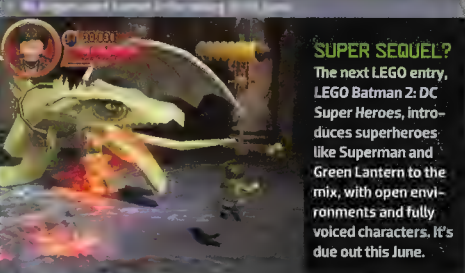
Harry Potter fans, LEGO
lovers

OVERALL RATING:

2.5



Professor Dumbledore is one of the game's many playable characters.



SUPER SEQUEL?

The next LEGO entry, *LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes*, introduces superheroes like Superman and Green Lantern to the mix, with open environments and fully voiced characters. It's due out this June.

MORTAL KOMBAT

Publisher: Warner Bros. Interactive • Developer: NetherRealm Studios • Platforms: PS Vita • Words: Timothy J. Seppala



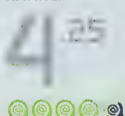
The main problem with carrying a bloodbath around in your pocket is the looks that strangers give as they walk past. My jeans could barely contain all the carnage of *Mortal Kombat*'s maiden Vita voyage. In addition to providing everything from last year's stellar home-console release, this handheld version includes all of the fighters and costumes that were sold as downloadable add-ons, as well as a massive new challenge tower.

What surprised me was just how well the challenge tower tasks worked in a portable environment. Each one takes around a minute maximum to complete, which makes them perfect for quick bursts of violence wherever you are. The Vita's D-pad is less than ideal, and extras—such as a Fruit Ninja clone that replaces "slicing" fruit with "slicing" body parts—feel gimmicky, but I don't foresee this version of *Mortal Kombat* leaving my pocket for a while.



MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
2-player online
GENRE Fighting
RELEASE DATE
May 1, 2012
SUITABLE FOR
Non-squeamish violence mongers

OVERALL RATING:



I don't like where that tree's eyes are pointing.



Try tilting or rotating the diary when a puzzle seems unsolvable.



Snap a photo when the circle turns red or you'll take damage.



SPIRIT CAMERA: THE CURSED MEMOIR



Publisher: Nintendo • Developer: Tecmo Koei
Platforms: 3DS • Words: Anne Lewis

After a mysterious and haunted diary made its way into my possession, I found myself imprisoned in a strange house, fending off vengeful spirits with only my trusty camera. Using the 3DS' camera, I had to explore pages of the diary and solve puzzles to uncover the house's mysteries—a unique (albeit awkward) implementation of the 3DS' AR functionality. Upon solving a puzzle, I had to scan the room for hostile ghosts and snap pictures of them to stop their assault. Unfortunately, *Spirit Camera*'s downfall lies in its inconvenience. Constantly having to move around to find spirits ensures it can't be played during commutes, and the augmented reality book requires good lighting, which sucks when you're playing a horror game.



MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Single-player only
GENRE Horror / Adventure
RELEASE DATE
April 13, 2012
SUITABLE FOR
Fans of photography, ghosts, or the *Fatal Frame* series

OVERALL RATING:





Words: Ryan Scott

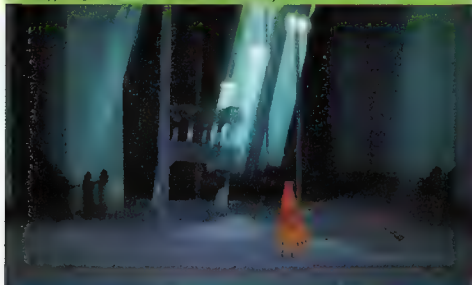
DOWNLOAD DIGEST

Interested in downloadable games? @GAMER's dedicated review column covers new titles, episodes, and add-ons to consider for your console and PC.

Your *Journey* is certainly a beautiful one.



Creepy things abound, but none of them will kill you.



It's grim, it's gritty, and it's all good.



MATURE 17+
ESRB

I AM ALIVE

Publisher: Ubisoft • Developer: Darkworks/Ubisoft Shanghai • Price: \$15 • Platforms: XBLA (March 7, 2012)

I Am Alive's opening conjures memories of Rick Grimes' lonely homecoming to a decimated Atlanta in *The Walking Dead*. The former lacks the latter's zombie infestation, but none of its desperation: Our ill-equipped protagonist climbs and runs across the disaster-ravaged Haventon, scrounging for resources and fending off hostile survivors as he searches for his family after "the event." Muted visuals, ever-withering stamina, and very lethal combat (ammo rarity makes early Resident Evil's look like shooting galleries) comprise a tense adventure.

OVERALL RATING: 4



JOURNEY

Publisher: SCEA • Developer: Thatgamecompany • Price: \$15 • Platforms: PSN (March 13, 2012)



EVERYONE
ESRB

Part puzzler and part platformer, Thatgamecompany's *Journey* embraces the sort of sublime, abstract minimalism that's become an indie-development hallmark in recent years. It's a game with no fatal threats, no dialogue (written or spoken), and no clearly defined objective: Put simply, it is a journey from a start point to an end point, wide open to interpretations that may very well span everything from birth to death. Your nameless red-robed avatar slides across sparkling dunes and trudges through oppressive snowstorms, gliding through the sky in short bursts, thanks to a mystical scarf that draws its energy from the semi-sentient rune-cloth denizens flitting about *Journey's* strange world.

The trip from one end of this lovingly animated desert to the other is both short and linear, and the mechanics never stray beyond "walk" and "jump/glide." The jumping-and-gliding puzzles consequently don't present much challenge, though I get the feeling that they're token gestures in what's intended as an interactive fable. Pity, then, that *Journey* affords itself neither time nor mechanical freedom to establish a proper bond between player and character; the abrupt ending left me feeling a bit hollow, just as my emotional attachment entered its formative stages. I love what's here—it's just not enough.

OVERALL RATING: 4



It's Ivan "Ironman" Stewart's Super RC Off-Road!



EVERYONE
ESRB

MOTORSTORM: RC

Publisher: SCEA • Developer: Evolution Studios • Price: \$10 • Platforms: PSN/PS Vita (March 6, 2012)

This little racing game shares more in common with classics like *RC Pro-Am* and *Super Off-Road* than it does with its PlayStation 3 predecessors. *MotorStorm RC* is loosey-goosey arcade racing at both its finest and most frustrating, packing tons of breezy races and time trials into four distinct circuits. This is a racer that ruthlessly punishes careless play; the controls take some definite acclimating, and oversteering is way, way too easy. Combine that with the lack of a minimap, and you're looking at a fair bit of memorization if you want to excel.

OVERALL RATING: 3.75





SKULLGIRLS

Publisher: Autumn Games/Konami • Developer: Reverge Labs •
Price: \$15 • Platforms: PSN (April 10, 2012), XBLA (April 11, 2012)

The brainchild of BlazBlue tournament player Mike Zaimont, *Skullgirls* is an unapologetically old-school 2D fighting game. Its eight-character roster—yes, eight...the same number the original *Street Fighter II* offered in 1991—picks as much variety as Capcom's current overcrowded fighters, handily demonstrating that breadth does not correlate one-to-one with depth.

Nor does simplicity correlate in the reverse: *Skullgirls*' hyper-stylized cast of gothic female brawlers trades the usual array of punches, kicks, quarter-circle specials, charge moves, assist moves, combos, and super moves. It's familiar and easy to pick up, while retaining all of the tricky kara cancels and combo traps (not to mention a built-in infinite combo detection/countering system) that high-level play thrives on. Its online mode (itself tragically sparse, with no arcade-style lobbies) employs GGPO netcode technology, which is nerd-speak for "wow, this game somehow eliminates all conceivable Internet lag," and is an outright blessing for dedicated players.

And *Skullgirls*—with its carefully designed fighting system and unbelievably well-animated characters—deserves lots of them. I sincerely hope its testosterone-fueled target audience makes peace with the all-girl cast (and the unfortunate omission of in-game move lists); this is one fighter that deserves a shot at the *Street Fighter IV*s of the world.

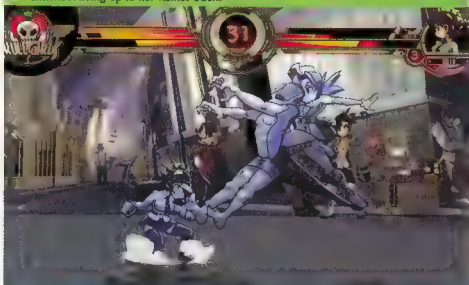
OVERALL RATING: 4.75



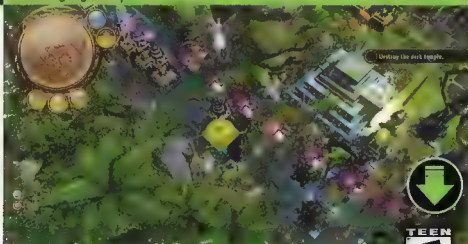
Parasoul (the cute redhead) is the closest *Skullgirls* has to a Gille-type character.



Painwheel living up to her name. Ouch.



This is going to erupt into utter chaos.



DEFENDERS OF ARDANIA

Publisher: Paradox Interactive • Developer: Most Wanted Entertainment
Price: \$15 • Platforms: XBLA (March 14, 2012), PC (March 14, 2012)

If "tower defense plus real-time strategy" sounds intimidating, that's because it is: The fantasy-themed *Defenders of Ardanía* presents a complex array of towers, grouped units, magical spells, rally points, terrain-claiming mechanics, and defensive upgrades to juggle as you reinforce your base and lay siege to the enemy's. It's a far cry from the relative wave-oriented simplicity of, say, *Plants vs. Zombies*...but not nearly as nuanced as a full-fledged RTS game. Either way, it's still a lot of plates to spin and a steep learning curve to climb.

OVERALL RATING: 3



Shoot stuff. Slow down time. Try not to die.



SINE MORA

Publisher: Microsoft • Developer: Grasshopper Manufacture/Digital Reality •
Price: \$15 • Platforms: XBLA (March 21, 2012)

Sine Mora is a manic shooter for people who suck at manic shooters: While the copious onscreen threats may make even seasoned *Ikaruga* players' heads spin, a limited-use time capsule cranks down the surrounding action to a slow crawl without impeding your little ship's own speed. An eternally depleting timer offsets this effect; more kills equals more time on the clock, but play too passively, and it becomes your worst enemy. All told, *Sine Mora* is a refreshing take on the most extreme fringe of the shoot-'em-up genre.

OVERALL RATING: 4.25





OF @GAMER RATINGS

LOTS
OF
SCORESRANK
HIGH

GAME/PRODUCT	ISSUE #	SCORE OUT OF 5
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Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	14	2.75
The Adventures of Tintin	16	2.5
Armored Core V	18	4.5
Assassin's Creed Revelations	15	4.5
Asura's Wrath	18	3.25

Batman: Arkham City	14	5
Battlefield 3	15	4
Binary Domain	18	3.5
Bit.Trip.Complete	14	4.5
Bit.Trip.Saga	14	4.25
The Black Eyed Peas Experience	16	3.5
Blades of Time	19	3.0
Bodycount	13	3.75

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	15	4.75
Call of Juarez: The Cartel	12	2.5
Camping Mama: Outdoor Adventures	14	3
Capcom Digital Collection	18	3
Carnival Island	16	3
Cartoon Network		
Punch Time Explosion XL	16	2.5
Cooking Mama 4	15	4.25
Crush3D	17	4
Curse Crusade	15	2.75

Dance Central 2	14	4
The Darkness 1	17	4
Dark Souls	14	4.5
Dead Island	14	2.5
Dead Rising 2: Off the Record	15	3
Devil May Cry HD Collection	19	2.75
Disney Universe	15	3
Dragon Ball Z: Ultimate Tenka chi	16	2.75
Driver: San Francisco	13	4.25

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	16	5
EyePet & Friends	16	2.75

F1 2011	14	4
FIFA 12	13	4.75
FIFA Street	17	3.75
Final Fantasy XIII-2	17	4.25
Forza Motorsport 4	14	4.5

Gears of War 3	13	4.25
Go Vacation	15	3
God of War: Origins Collection	13	3.75
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	16	3
Grand Slam Tennis 2	17	4
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	12	2.75

Halo: Combat Evolved Anniversary	16	4
Hole in the Wall: Deluxe Edition	15	2.5
The House of the Dead: Overkill-Extended Cut	15	3.75

GAME/PRODUCT	ISSUE #	SCORE OUT OF 5
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Ico and Shadow of the Colossus Collection	13	4.75
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Jagged Alliance: Back in Action	18	3
James Noir's Hollywood Crimes	13	4.25
Just Dance 3	14	3

Karaoke Revolution Glee: Volume 3	16	4.5
Kid Icarus: Uprising	19	3.25
Kinect Disneyland Adventures	16	4.5
Kinect Rush	19	4.0
Kinect Sports Season Two	16	3
Kinect Star Wars	19	3.75
King of Fighters XIII	16	2.5
Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning	17	4.75
Kirby Mass Attack	14	4
Kirby's Return to Dream Land	16	3.25

The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	15	4.5
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	16	4.25
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7 (Vita)	19	2.5
The Lord of the Rings: War in the North	15	3.75

Mahjong Cub3d	15	2.75
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games (3DS)	18	3.25
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games (Wii)	18	2.75
Mario Kart 7	16	4
Mario Party 9	18	4
Mass Effect 3	18	5
Medieva: Moves: Deadmund's Quest	16	3.25
Meta Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	17	4.5
Might & Magic Heroes VI	15	3.5
MLB 12 The Show	18	4.5
MLB 2K12	17	3.5
Mortal Kombat (Vita)	19	4.25

NASCAR Unleashed	15	3.5
Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations	18	3.5
NBA 2K12	14	4.75
Need For Speed: The Run	16	3.5
NeverDead	18	2.5
Nicktoons MLB	14	2.75
Ninja Gaiden 3	18	3

Otomedius Excellent	16	2.5
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Pokémon Rumble Blast	15	2.5
PokePark 2: Wonders Beyond	18	3
PowerUp Heroes	14	4.25
Pro Evolution Soccer 2012	15	3.5
Prototype 2	18	4.5

Rage	14	4.5
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GAME/PRODUCT	ISSUE #	SCORE OUT OF 5
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Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	15	4
Raving Rabbids: Alive & Kicking	15	3.25
Rayman Origins	15	4.5
Red Orchestra 2	14	3.75
Resident Evil: Revelations	17	4
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	19	2.75
Resistance 3	13	4.5
Ridge Racer Unbounded	19	3.25
Rise of Nightmares	13	3.5
Risen 2: Dark Waters (PC)	19	3.75
Rhythm Heaven Fever	18	4.5

Saints Row: The Third	15	4.25
Serious Sam 3: BFE	16	4.25
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked	13	4.75
Silent Hill Downpour	18	3.5
Silent Hill HD Collection	17	2.75
The Sims 3: Pets	14	4
The Sims 3: Showtime	18	3.5
Sniper Elite V2	19	3
Sonic Generations	15	3.25
SoulCalibur V	17	4
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	15	4
Spiri Camera: The Cursed Memoir	19	3
SSX	17	4

Star Fox 64 3D	13	4.25
Star Wars: The Old Republic	17	4.5
Street Fighter X Tekken	18	4
Stronghold 3	15	2.5
Super Mario 3D Land	16	4.5
Syndicate	17	4

Tales of Graces f	17	4
Tekken 3D Prime Edition	17	3.5
Tekken Hybrid	16	2.5
Tera	19	4
Telris Axis	15	3.25
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13	18	4
Twisted Metal	18	3.75

UFC Undisputed 3	17	3
Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3	16	5
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	15	5
Unit 13	18	4

Warhammer 40K: Space Marine	13	4
White Knight Chronicles	14	2.5
The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings	19	4.5
World of Tanks	14	4
WWE '12	16	4

Yakuza: Dead Souls	19	3.25
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2012	16	4.5

Zumba Fitness Rush	18	4.5
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- 91 Motorola Droid Razer 4G Verizon
- 92 Thrustmaster Ferrari F1 Wheel Integral T500 for Windows and PS3
- 94 Turtle Beach Ear Force Z6A Gaming Headset
- 95 Sony Media / Blu-ray Remote for PS3
- 95 Microsoft Media Remote for Xbox 360



WIL SAYS:

I may have stepped down as @GAMER's editor-in-chief, but that doesn't mean that I'm gone for good. As @GAMER's resident hardware geek, I'll continue my role as the mag's hardware guru. So, here we are with a bevy of good stuff for you: sweet phones, gaming headsets, media remotes, and the ultimate racing wheel are on tap this month.

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SAMSUNG GALAXY NOTE 4G MOBILE PHONE

The Reese's Peanut Butter Cup of devices • Words: George Jones

PHONE? TABLET? PHABLET?

Samsung forges new ground with the Galaxy Note, which blurs the line between smart phone and tablet. The 5.3-inch screen is the largest I've seen on a phone.

ICE CREAM SANDWICH?

At 5.8 inches high by 3.3 inches wide, the Galaxy Note's dimensions overshadow everything else. Thankfully, it's just as thin as an iPad.

STYLUS INCLUDED

The Galaxy Note's digital pen conveniently tucks into the bottom of the phone.

8MP REAR CAMERA

The state-of-the-art high-res camera isn't quite as nice as the iPhone 4S's, but it's close. A 2MP camera is up front.

HOLY AMOLED!

The 1280 x 800 AMOLED display is a head-turner. Crisp, colorful, and vibrant—it's everything you could want in a phone display.

SAMSUNG GALAXY NOTE 4G MOBILE PHONE

Manufacturer: Samsung

www.samsung.com

Price: \$300 with AT&T contract, \$650 without

OVERALL SCORE: 4



The first thing everyone notices is how big the Galaxy Note is. But it's more than just a large device, because the phone's features and specifications are impressive—so it's big, sure, but with the size comes strength.

The 5.3-inch 1280x800 AMOLED screen is one of the nicest-looking I've ever seen, and the 1.4GHz dual-core ARM Cortex A9 processor is extremely fast.

The standout feature, of course, is the built-in "S Pen," which allows note-taking, handwriting entry/recognition, and more. I'll say this: The S Pen allows for far more precision than a third-party iPad stylus, and a set of custom apps allows you to use the phone in a more tablet-like manner.

The only real downside here is battery performance: You'll have to charge the Galaxy

Note every night, and even then you'll probably still find your battery depleted towards the end of a busy day.

Do you need (or want) a stylus when a finger will do? That's a personal decision, but I can verify that the Galaxy Note fit perfectly in my jeans' back pocket—and surprisingly enough, didn't bother me that much when placed in the front pocket either.

MOTOROLA DROID RAZR 4G MOBILE PHONE

BY NICK D'AMICO
PHOTO: ANDREW CHAN

When you think about super-slim phones, the word "tough" doesn't immediately jump to mind. But that's the case with the Motorola RAZR 4G for Verizon. This Android 2.3.5 Gingerbread-powered phone not only rocks an amazingly scratch-resistant screen, but Motorola even claims that it's water repellent (and no, I didn't drop mine in a toilet with our test unit).

By some margin, it's best with this handset—after all, it's the only one that can play with the most powerful Android phone. While the RAZR 4G is a pretty solid device, it's not the most powerful or the most feature-rich. But it's the most

4.3-inch Super AMOLED display and 1.2GHz dual-core processor make this baby great for gaming.

Of course, you don't need this kind of horsepower for games such as *Cut the Rope* and *Angry Birds*, but it sure doesn't hurt. Though with this level of hardware, games such as *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit* and *Asphalt 6: Adrenaline* play great.

If you're a Verizon user who wants something more powerful than the latest iPhone, you can't go wrong here. Just be sure to keep that charger handy. **B**



The Droid RAZR 4G sports HDMI-out as well as a USB port.

Phones get beaten up pretty badly. The Droid RAZR has a super-tough screen and is even water repellent.

I expected the picture quality of the 8-megapixel camera to be better.



GAMES GALORE!
Everyone loves *Cut the Rope*, but this mobile has the horsepower to handle so much more than that.

NAVIGATION:
Verizon's 4G/LTE service is super fast. *Words With Friends* anyone?

MOTOROLA DROID
RAZR 4G (16GB)
MOBILE PHONE

Manufacturer: Motorola
www.motorola.com
Price: \$199.99

OVERALL SCORE: 4



**TOUCH THE MAGIC**

The rubberized wheel is really solid and feels great to the touch. The base is also really stout.

PS3 OR PC

The PS3 supports 13 buttons and three D-pads in normal mode, while the PC supports 25 buttons and one D-pad in advanced mode.

**FLIGHT-READY?**

At first glance it looks like the cockpit of a jet. But it makes sense during gameplay, trust me.

**PADDLES**

This setup sports F1-style push and pull paddle shifters.

THRUSTMASTER FERRARI F1 WHEEL INTEGRAL T500

Strictly for the hardest of the hardcore • Words: William O'Neal

The Thrustmaster Ferrari F1 Wheel Integral T500—aside from having one of the worst names in the history of peripherals—is essentially an upgrade to the company's T500 RS that we reviewed last year, with the exception that, unlike its predecessor, it's compatible with both the PS3 and the PC.

While the footrest is identical to its predecessor's, the real difference comes in the

form of the authentic Ferrari F1 wheel. Modeled after the very same wheel that Fernando Alonso uses, hardcore racing fans will love not only the wheel's visual authenticity, but the abundance of action buttons and switches that allow you to experience racing games as if you were in the car's cockpit.

In normal mode for the PS3, the wheel sports 13 "action" buttons and three D-pads,

while in advanced mode for the PC, it rocks 25 "action" buttons and one D-pad.

I tested the wheel with Codemasters' F1 2011 and it dramatically improved my experience. On PC, I used it with the free-to-play Simraceway and got hooked.

At \$699.99, this thing is a major purchase; if you already have the T500 RS, you can just upgrade the wheel for \$199.99. **D**

THRUSTMASTER

You can change the pedal position from F1 (shown) to GT style. The thing is, switching styles is a major pain.

RESISTANCE IS NOT FUTILE!

The resistance offered by these pedals makes it easy to feather them while racing.

LEAD FOOT

The metal footrest not only looks awesome, but was super-stable during my testing.

THRUSTMASTER FERRARI F1 WHEEL INTEGRAL T500

Manufacturer: Thrustmaster

www.thrustmaster.com

Price: \$699.99

OVERALL SCORE: 3.75





TURTLE BEACH EAR FORCE Z6A GAMING HEADSET

Shelly Knecht | Contributing Editor | Gaming | Special: Design Award

First thing I noticed about the Ear Force Z6A is the 7.1 surround sound. The design is not necessarily the best. Surprisingly, after using it for 24 hours, the sound is not the best. It's not the best.

The 7.1 surround sound is a good thing, but the sound is not the best. It's not the best. The sound is not the best. It's not the best.

Second, the sound is not the best. It's not the best. The sound is not the best. It's not the best.

Third, the sound is not the best. It's not the best. The sound is not the best. It's not the best.

Fourth, the sound is not the best. It's not the best. The sound is not the best. It's not the best.

Fifth, the sound is not the best. It's not the best. The sound is not the best. It's not the best.

Headset, and the sound is not the best. It's not the best. The sound is not the best. It's not the best.

FLEXIBLE MIC

The Z6A has a flexible mic. Unfortunately, I couldn't eliminate the mic's audio from the incoming audio feed.

SOFT SURROUND

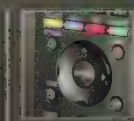
Each of the Z6A's earcups contains four angled speakers—including a booming 40mm subwoofer—to more accurately reproduce surround effects.



**TURTLE BEACH
EAR FORCE Z6A
GAMING HEADSET**
Manufacturer: Turtle Beach
www.turtlebeach.com
Price: \$99.99

OVERALL SCORE: 3.75





OVERKILL?

The Sony Media Remote has many, *many* buttons. Most of them, you'll never need.

MICROSOFT MEDIA REMOTE FOR XBOX 360

Manufacturer: Microsoft
www.microsoft.com

Price: \$19.99

OVERALL SCORE: 3.75



SONY MEDIA / BLU-RAY REMOTE FOR PS3

Manufacturer: Sony
www.sony.com

Price: \$24.99

OVERALL SCORE: 4



UNDERKILL?

The Sony remote has too many buttons. The Xbox model? Too few.

PS3 AND XBOX 360 REMOTES

Controllers are for gaming. Get a remote!

• Words: William O'Neal

There was a time when consoles were used for... well, games. Yet while gaming is the primary use for a "gaming" console, the fact remains that they do a whole lot more. As last month's feature on watching TV on your console can attest to, we use our consoles to consume gigs of non-gaming media. From Hulu Plus and Netflix to ESPN and sports programming such as MLB.TV and NFL Sunday Ticket, your console is a full-on media device. So, why are you still using a controller for everything?

SONY—MEDIA/BLU-RAY DISC REMOTE CONTROL FOR PLAYSTATION 3

At press time, NFL Sunday Ticket is only available on the PS3. Add Hulu Plus and Netflix, and my PS3 is pretty much always being used for something. This controller is great for controlling media, but it also works well with my Sony soundbar as a universal remote. I could even use it to control my Sharp Aquos TV. Of course, it was designed for Blu-ray playback and it's phenomenal for that.

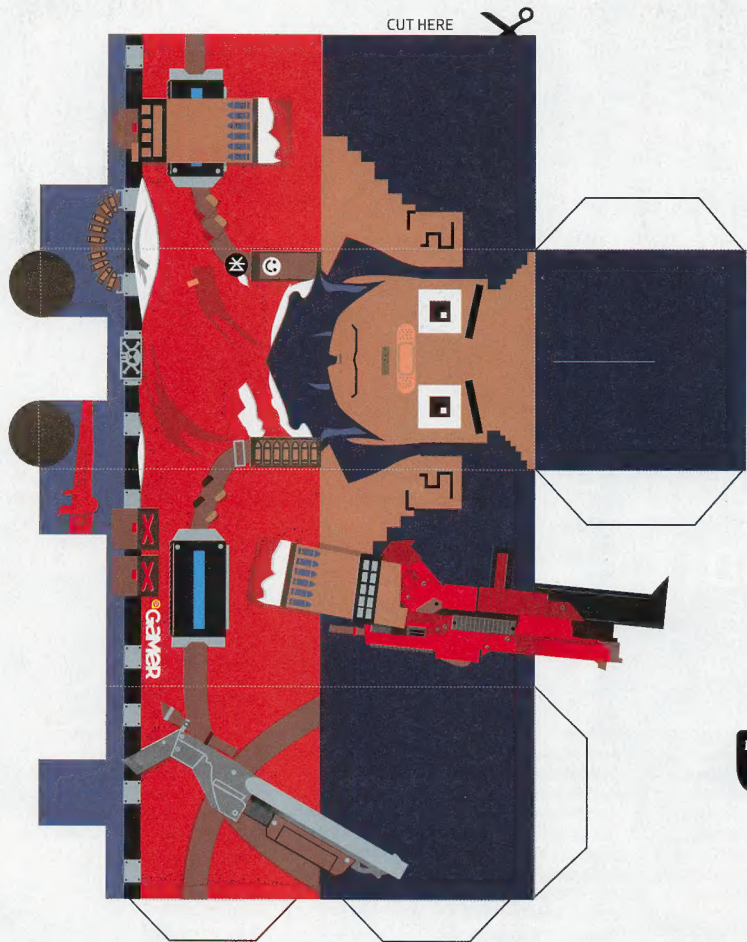
MICROSOFT—MEDIA REMOTE FOR XBOX 360

Where the Sony remote had a little bit of everything, the Xbox 360 remote is only about the Xbox 360. While it works well for the tasks at hand—watching Netflix and Hulu Plus—I would prefer more functionality...most notably, the ability to use it as a universal remote for all of my gadgets. Of course, for \$19.99, I didn't really expect much. One upside is that it's always on, so unlike a controller, you don't have to power it up first.

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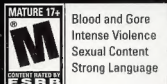
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PS3



XBOX 360

XBOX LIVE



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